

Western  Graduate&PostdoctoralStudies

Western University
Scholarship@Western

Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository

8-9-2018 10:00 AM

Student Perceptions of the Context of Mass Higher Education

Caitlin Burd

The University of Western Ontario

Supervisor

Willson, Andrea

The University of Western Ontario

Graduate Program in Sociology

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Arts

© Caitlin Burd 2018

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd>

 Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Burd, Caitlin, "Student Perceptions of the Context of Mass Higher Education" (2018). *Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository*. 5500.

<https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/5500>

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarship@Western. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository by an authorized administrator of Scholarship@Western. For more information, please contact wlsadmin@uwo.ca.

Abstract

Universities across North America are experiencing the process of massification, which involves an increasing proportion of the population engaging in higher education. The purpose of this study is to improve our understanding of how students perceive the current context of university, their place within this environment, and whether they see factors associated with massification as impacting student well-being. This study employs in-depth, semi-structured interviews with second and third-year students at a large Canadian university. Findings indicate that students recognize factors associated with massification, such as their own disengagement, and view the university as responsible for some of their experiences in university. Further, this study demonstrates that students feel pressure, stress, anxiety, and isolation that they perceive as resulting from some of these factors. This research will help shed light on student experiences in the current context of higher education and provide directions for future research in this area.

Keywords:

massification, higher education, university, commercialization, disengagement, student well-being, social capital, social network, social support systems

Acknowledgments

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those people who played significant roles in the formulation of this thesis. First, I want to thank the students who participated in this study. Their first-hand experiences, knowledge, and perceptions were essential to this project and without their input, this study would not have been possible. Their openness, eagerness, and willingness to discuss their experiences and ideas was greatly appreciated.

I would also like to express gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Andrea Willson. You have always been the voice of reason throughout this project, calming my worries and inspiring me to do my best. I am so thankful for your guidance and support throughout this project. Thank you for helping me develop the skills needed to see this project through and believing in me along the way. I have learned so much from you and with your help have grown both academically and personally. I will never forget your endless support, kindness, and dedication.

Dr. Jim Côté, your input into this thesis was crucial to the project and made it the best it could be. Thank you for your patience, your support, and your willingness to aid whenever necessary. You have consistently pushed me to produce my best work, and to consider avenues that have strengthened this project. I could not have completed this project without you, and I am so grateful for your support along this journey.

I would also like to thank my examiners, Dr. Wolfgang Lehmann, Dr. Tracey Adams, and Dr. Pam Bishop, for agreeing to be a part of the examination committee and taking time to read and analyze my thesis. Your input and feedback is greatly appreciated.

To a professor who pushed me to do better and encouraged me to keep going when times became tough, I would like to thank Dr. Anton Allahar. Sitting in your class for the first time in fourth-year was an eye-opening experience that I could never thank you enough for. Your

guidance, friendship, and kind words inspired me to continue my education and kept my spirits up during this process. With your guidance and support, I have learned to critically analyze the world around me, and this approach was essential in this project. Thank you for believing in me and never giving up on me. It has truly been a blessing to have been able to see your passion and dedication for teaching and it is something that I will forever cherish.

To my family, thank you for putting up with many sleepless nights and stressful days. You have all been the support I have needed while putting this project together. Thank you to my parents who have always pushed me to be my best and to figure out my own path in my own way. I would not be where I am today without both of you.

Lastly, I would like to extend thanks to my friends and office mates who were supportive and uplifting during the extent of this project. Specifically, I would like to acknowledge the support of Meghan Miller, Sagi Ramaj, and Holly Meaney. During times of unease or worry, you were all there to lend an ear, to hear any ideas I was struggling with, and to help me work through the stress to produce an end product that I am so proud of. Thank you for listening to my rambling when I could not work through an idea, and offering feedback and suggestions to help me along the way. Your endless support and friendship has helped me so many times along this journey, and for that I am grateful.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables	viii
List of Appendices	ix
Chapter 1	1
1 Introduction	1
Chapter 2	4
2 Literature Review: Changes in University Structures and Associated Outcomes	4
2.1 The Process of Massification	5
2.1.1 The Canadian Context of Higher Education	7
2.1.2 Factors Underlying Massification in Canada	8
2.2 The Structural Context of Massification	11
2.3 Individual Processes Associated with Massification	14
2.3.1 Motivations for Attending University	14
2.3.2 Preferences and Outcomes Associated with Access and Class Size	16
2.3.2.1 Academic Outcomes Associated with Class Size	18
2.3.2.2 Connections to Student Well-being	20
2.3.3 Student Engagement and Disengagement	21
2.3.3.1 Academic and Social Engagement	23
2.3.3.2 Teaching Methods, Technology, and Student Engagement	26
2.3.3.3 Connections to Student Well-being	28

Chapter 3	31
3 Literature Review: Student Well-being and Access to Resources	31
3.1 Student Well-being	31
3.1.1 Student Perceptions and Considering the Context	35
3.2 Mental Health Resources	38
3.2.1 Accessibility and Adequacy of On-campus Mental Health Resources	38
3.2.2 Help Seeking Behaviours	41
Chapter 4	46
4 Research Methodology	46
4.1 Research Questions	46
4.2 Methodology and Design of the Study	47
4.2.1 Site Selection	47
4.2.2 Participant Selection.....	48
4.3 Data Collection Procedures	49
4.3.1 Instruments	50
4.4. Participant Demographics	51
4.5 Human Participants and Ethics Precautions	54
4.6 Data Analysis	54
4.7 Reflexivity	56
Chapter 5	57
5 Results	57
5.1 The University's Responsibility	57
5.1.1 Orientation Week	60

5.1.2 Mental Health Resources	62
5.1.3 Engagement: The Responsibility of Professors	66
5.1.4 Personal Growth	70
5.2 Feelings of Isolation, Social Support, and Social Networks	72
5.3 Stress and Anxiety	80
5.3.1 Stress and Anxiety from Factors Associated with Massification	84
Chapter 6	97
6 Discussion and Conclusions	97
6.1 Overview of Findings and Relation to Existing Literature	97
6.1.1 Recognition and Perceptions of Massification	98
6.1.2 Students' Perceived Position in a Massified University	98
6.1.3 Student Well-being Related to Massification	104
6.2 Sociological Implications and Contributions	111
6.3 Limitations and Directions for Future Research	113
6.4 Conclusion	115
References	117
Appendices	127
Curriculum Vitae	136

List of Tables

Table 1: Participant Profiles	53
-------------------------------------	----

List of Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Guide	127
Appendix B: Letter of Information and Consent Form	132
Appendix C: Ethics Approval Form	135

Chapter 1

1 Introduction

University systems across North America have become massified, which involves an increasing proportion of the population engaging in higher education (Allais, 2014; Chow, 2007; Guder, Malliaris, & Jalilvand, 2009; Kruisselbrink Flatt, 2013; Trow, 1961; Trow, 1974; Trow, 2006). Universities began as elite institutions, with access based largely on privilege, and in this stage higher education aimed to cultivate the minds of the ruling class (Trow, 2006). In these institutions, academic standards were high, and as a result the quality of education was also high (Trow, 2006). In transitioning from elite institutions to institutions for the masses, the standards to which students are held have been loosened to service a larger and more diverse student population (Trow, 2006). This increase in the size of and variation in the student body is driven by employers' emphasis on credentials, leading to pressures to obtain a university degree to achieve or maintain a middle-class lifestyle (Brown, 2016; Trow, 1961; Trow, 1992). In tandem with universities becoming more open and accessible, there has been a decrease in funding for postsecondary institutions, as well as lower standards at high schools leading to more unprepared students entering higher education (Côté & Allahar, 2012).

Research on massification has focused on the learning or academic outcomes associated with aspects of this transformation, including student disengagement, grade-point average (GPA), degree completion, and time spent studying (Côté & Allahar, 2012; Flynn, 2014; Guder et al., 2009; Hickinbottom-Brawn & Burns, 2015; Svanum & Bigatti, 2009). Less research has examined student well-being in a massified university context. As such, the link between students' awareness of factors associated with massification and student well-being is not well understood. Further, previous research has not directly asked students to elaborate on how they

interpret and understand the factors associated with massification and whether they feel that these factors impact their well-being.

The aim of this study is to analyze the narratives of students in a massified university system to determine whether they recognize factors linked to massification, whether these factors influence how they view their position in the university, and whether they see these factors as impacting student well-being. The current study contributes to existing literature by providing an in-depth understanding of how students view factors associated with massification and how these factors impact them in a Canadian context. Research on massification has largely been focused in the United States or the United Kingdom and has utilized survey methods to analyze single or a small number of factors associated with massification. A benefit of the current study is the inclusion of multiple factors associated with massification in the same study to see how students perceive the connections between these factors and the university environment more holistically. These contributions provide insights on the impact of a massified university system on students by providing a deeper understanding of students' recognition of factors linked to massification, students' conceptualizations of their place in the university system, and how students view massification as impacting student well-being.

In Chapters 2 and 3, I provide a detailed discussion of the previous literature on student outcomes in a massified university system and student well-being. Chapter 2 focuses on the transition to massification in a Canadian context and research that aims to analyze the academic outcomes for students in the current context of higher education. This chapter also reviews the limited research on the connection between the factors associated with massification and student well-being. In Chapter 3, I discuss literature on student well-being in terms of how well-being is typically measured, student access to mental health resources, and student use of these resources.

Chapter 4 includes the research methodology and design of the current study. This chapter details the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the study, demographic characteristics of the sample, and additional information on the limitations and benefits of the study and ethical considerations. In this section, I also present the research questions that guided the research and the approach for data analysis.

Next, in Chapter 5, I detail the results of the study derived from analysis of in-depth interviews with participants. This chapter outlines the main themes that emerged from the analysis. Within these themes, factors associated with massification from participants' narratives are examined, including motivations for attending university, class size and student populations, contact with faculty and other students, student disengagement, and use or access to mental health resources. This section more broadly outlines participants' perceptions of the academic and emotional outcomes associated with higher education.

Lastly, Chapter 6 focuses on a discussion of the results, connections to previous literature, and discussions of the implications of this research. First, I review the three main themes derived from the results in Chapter 5 to address the research questions of this study, and situate the findings in the previous research. Next, I discuss the sociological and policy implications of the research to point to some potential suggestions to address the concerns of students that surfaced in this study that may be affecting student academic achievement and well-being. Lastly, I discuss some limitations of the current research and some avenues for future research to consider and provide a few concluding statements.

Chapter 2

2 Literature Review: Changes in University Structures and Associated Outcomes

There have been several changes in the structure of universities in North America over the last decades in terms of the size of universities, the variation in university student bodies, and the purposes of pursuing a university education. These changes are tied to the process of massification that universities are said to be transitioning through. Massification involves increased access to higher education in response to changes in the economy (Clark, 2000; Trow, 2006). This shift has led to the increased importance of postsecondary credentials for labour market participation (Clark, 2000; Trow, 2006).

In this chapter, I first outline Martin Trow's (1974; 2000; 2006) seminal work on the three stages of massification, and then show how Canadian universities fit into these stages. Expansions in Canadian universities over time will be outlined, as well as factors underlying these expansions, such as greater participation in universities by women, shifts toward credentialism and commercialization, and policies aiding non-traditional students to attend.

Next, I discuss several other structural changes that are tied to this transformation, such as the role of secondary schools, the lowering or changing academic standards of universities, mismatched increases in university student populations and faculty, as well as funding challenges in higher education. Research suggests that these structural changes have impacted individual students academically and emotionally, in both positive and negative ways, which will be discussed. Literature presented below mainly focuses on research from baccalaureate universities in both Canada and other countries.

2.1 The Process of Massification

Massification, or the process by which higher education transforms through the stages of elite, mass, and universal, is occurring in tandem with changes and expansions in the structure of the economy (Trow, 1961; Trow 1974; Trow, 2006). These changes include shifts following the Industrial Revolution, the expansion of the service economy, and a shift to neoliberal ideologies (Trow, 1961; Trow 1974; Trow, 2006). Through the process of massification, it is argued that higher education has transformed from an institution aimed at cultivating the minds of the ruling class, to a training institution for the masses, aimed at transmitting skills, preparing students for more technical roles, and adapting to technological change (Trow, 1974; Trow, 2006). As North America shifted from an agriculturally based economy to one that required more highly educated workers, access to postsecondary school expanded (Clark, 2000). Access became increasingly viewed as a right in mass systems, and an obligation in universal ones (Trow, 2006). Increases in the size and variation of the student body have been driven by employers' emphasis on credentials (Alarcon, Edwards, & Menke, 2011; Brown, 2016; Murray, 2008). This has led to increased pressures to obtain a university degree to achieve or maintain a middle-class lifestyle (Hout, 2012; Trow, 1961; Trow, 1992). Empirical research now finds that higher education is related not only to higher income, but also longer life expectancy, more family stability, wider social networks, and better health, steering more people to enter this institution (Hout, 2012; Schwartz & Kay, 2014). With these tangible and intangible benefits, increasing access to higher education is generally viewed as a positive trend. However, through the process of massification, educational institutions have faced many changes and challenges that have altered the structure of this institution.

Trow (1961; 2000) conceptualized these changes in higher education as occurring over several decades. Trow (2000) acknowledged the presence of the structure of mass higher education in the United States in the early 1900s. However, he also acknowledged that massification did not start taking shape in the United States until the mid 1950s following the Second World War and after the introduction of the GI Bill that aimed to integrate veterans into the labour market. In that light, he saw elite institutions, attended by 0 to 15% of the population, dominating until the 1950s. At that point, mass institutions, which 16 to 50% of the population attended, took over. The final stage in Trow's conceptualization is the universal stage, where over 50% of the population attend. In this stage, Trow argued that universal access would change the structure of higher education altogether, providing web-based instruction to a wider number of students, but inevitably transmitting a more vocational form of higher education. For these latter two stages, Trow did not have clearly defined time frames, as the trajectory of higher education had not fully taken shape. He was also grappling with the impact of technological advancements, such as Information Technology, on higher education. He saw similar patterns for higher education emerging in European countries and following the United States model, though in slightly different ways based on structural differences within the systems of education in different regions (Trow, 1961; Trow, 2000). Other scholars add that massification is a global trend affecting higher education institutions around the world, leading to a 200% increase in the number of postsecondary students worldwide from the 1900s to the early 2000s (Barbosa & Dwyer, 2016).

It has been argued elsewhere that, since the 1980s, the United States has been in a period of post-massification due to less public support for higher education (McDonough & Miller, 2016). These scholars argue that, during this period, growth in postsecondary school enrolment

slowed due to “maturation”, or the refinement and re-analysis of the education system in the United States. In this view, gaining postsecondary credentials is viewed as less valuable than in the past, and access to universities becomes increasingly unequal as schools primarily admit top or high performing students (McDonough & Miller, 2016). However, and in opposition to this view, most scholars agree that massification in most countries is still developing (Barbosa & Dwyer, 2016; Côté & Furlong, 2016; Hayes & Wynyard, 2016; Pickard, 2016; Trow, 2000). Most research in this area focuses on higher education outside of Canada, and as such the Canadian context will be described to establish where Canadian universities fit in these conceptualizations of the transformation of higher education.

2.1.1 The Canadian Context of Higher Education

Over the last 100 years, educational attainment in Canada has increased (Chen & Oderkirk, 1997; Clark, 2000). Substantial growth in all levels of schooling occurred in Canada until the late 1940s, with university enrollment increasing 57% from 1920 to 1940 (Clark, 2000). From 1951 to 1975, enrollment in Canadian universities increased six-fold, reaching 371,000 students in 1975 (Sunter, 1992; Wisenthal, 2014). By 1984, about 276,000 students were entering their first-year of undergraduate studies or pursuing their first professional degree (Chen & Oderkirk, 1997).

Through the early 1990s to 2005, increases in participation in postsecondary education for Canadians did continue, particularly for those aged 20 to 24 (Hango & de Broucker, 2007). By the end of the 20th century, more people held undergraduate degrees than those with less than a high school diploma (Clark, 2000). In this period, it was predicted that enrollment would steadily decline after 2013, due to the changing nature of the labour market and over-engagement in higher education (Hango & de Broucker, 2007). However, enrollment has continued to climb

in Canada, with increases of a couple hundred thousand full-time university students per year (Statistics Canada, 2016). Statistics Canada (2016) estimates that nearly 1.3 million students were enrolled in a Canadian university in the 2014 school year. Enrollment was highest for Ontario, with Ontarian students making up nearly half of Canadian students (Statistics Canada, 2016). In 2016, enrollment rose to 1.7 million students, with the majority registered in full-time studies (Universities Canada, 2017). This demonstrates the continued importance of higher education for labour market participation, and that enrollment is still on the rise in Canada.

Age-graded population data and enrollment data can be used to estimate Canadian postsecondary institutions' place in Trow's conceptualization of elite, mass, and universal education institutions. It is estimated that 20% of those aged 15 to 24 attended a university in Canada in 2015 (Statistics Canada, 2017c; Statistics Canada, 2017f). Relating this to Trow's conceptualization of massification, as 16 to 50% of the population are enrolled in postsecondary education, Canadian universities can be said to be in the mass stage (Trow, 1974; Trow, 2000; Trow, 2006). Furthermore, in 2016, 28.5% of those aged 25 to 64 held a bachelor's degree or higher (Statistics Canada, 2017b), up nearly 3% from 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2015). If university certificates are included, this value rises to nearly 32% (Statistics Canada, 2017b). These statistics further support the position that, according to Trow's (1974; 2000; 2006) framework, Canada is in the mass stage of this transformation.

2.1.2 Factors underlying Massification in Canada

There are several reasons why enrollment in Canadian universities increased over the last century. First and foremost, in the early 1900s women did not have equal access to higher education, and as they obtained greater access, student populations grew (Clark, 2000). This is reflected in higher enrollment rates in female-dominated fields or departments during the mid-

1900s and on, such as education, the health sciences, or the arts and humanities (Chen & Oderkirk, 1997; Clark, 2000). By the 1990s and into the early 2000s, women outnumbered men at universities (Chen & Oderkirk, 1997; Clark, 2000). However, women remained underrepresented in male-dominated fields, representing only 26% of students in mathematics or computer science in 2008 (The Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada, 2011). Although some more recent research indicates that proportions between men and women are becoming more equal (Kruisselbrink Flatt, 2013), other research shows that women still outnumber men at universities. For example, in 2010, 56% of all Canadian university students were women and 58% of university undergraduates were women (The Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada, 2011).

As well, and similar to other countries, there has been a shift away from an agriculturally-based economy in which education was not highly valued, to one in which higher education is viewed as a necessity (Clark, 2000). Increasing educational attainment in Canada occurred in response to a perceived need for postsecondary credentials to compete in a technologically advanced and globally competitive labour market (Chen & Oderkirk, 1997; Clark, 2000). The desire for these credentials to enhance participation in the labour market may reflect a shift in liberal education institutions to a greater focus on the vocational training of students. For example, in 2016, 55% of Canadian undergraduates felt they benefitted from hands-on training in university (Universities Canada, 2017).

There also have been policies instituted to help non-traditional students obtain higher education credentials. Much like the GI Bill in the United States (Côté & Furlong, 2016), in Canada policies were developed to allow and encourage war veterans to pursue a postsecondary education, with the government covering tuition costs in part or full (Clark, 2000). The Canada

Student Loans Program was also created to provide loans to full-time students who demonstrate financial need (Plager & Chen, 1999). Because more students than in the past also engage in part-time work while in university, these loan programs aimed to lessen the financial burden for students and give them the opportunity to opt-out of work while engaging in postsecondary education (Sunter, 1992). It is important to note that Canadian postsecondary education is a provincial responsibility, so each of the provinces employs slightly different policies aimed at accessibility in higher education (Clark, 2000). As well, the availability of loans and grants is closely tied to the economy, as when economic downturns occur, the availability of grants and loans decreases (Clark, 2000).

The increasing availability of student loans was also in response to rising tuition costs, which doubled from 1986 to 1996 (Murray, 2000). Although grants and loans enabled some students to attend postsecondary school, tuition continued to rise (Clark, 2000). In 2010, tuition fees across Canada averaged \$5,146; these fees increased to \$6,571 in 2017, with the highest tuition for Ontario schools at \$8,454 (Statistics Canada, 2014; Statistics Canada, 2017a). Fees are not standard across departments, as professional programs like law, dentistry, and medicine tend to have the highest fees (Statistics Canada, 2014). Outside of professional programs, engineering has the highest tuition (Statistics Canada, 2014). Thus, although grants and loans have increased to offer financial aid to those who demonstrate need, this aid may not cover all costs.

Despite rising enrollment rates and more student grants and loans, disparities still exist in opportunities for accessing higher education (Murray, 2000). Those of lower socio-economic status (SES) and minority students continue to face substantial barriers to access, related in part to tuition costs and rising student debt (Clark, 2000; Flynn, 2014; Murray, 2000). Many students in the 1990s graduated from postsecondary school with substantial debt that they were unable to

repay, leading to loan default (Plager & Chen, 1999). So, while access has widened and more students are attending postsecondary school, barriers to access remain.

2.2 The Structural Context of Massification

There are several structural processes that are associated with massification that may be direct or indirect outcomes of this transformation. These include the role that secondary schools play in the transformation to mass or universal higher education, increases in student access without comparable increases in the number of faculty members, shifts toward credentialism and commercialization, and potential funding challenges for postsecondary schools. These processes are discussed below in terms of how they impact the institution of higher education.

As universities massify in response to a perceived need for postsecondary credentials, students who ordinarily may not have been on the path to university may opt to attend (Allais, 2014; Côté & Allahar, 2012; Côté & Furlong, 2016; Trow, 1974). This is due in part to the role of secondary schools as preparatory systems that cast attending postsecondary school as the only desirable choice, and not attending as a failure (Fallis, 2016; Trow, 1961; Trow, 2000). Secondary schools employ no-fail policies to decrease drop-out rates, which can lead to unprepared students pursuing higher education (Côté & Allahar, 2012). As a result, some argue that academic standards have been loosened to service a larger and more heterogeneous student population (Côté & Furlong, 2016; Trow, 1974; Trow, 2006). The question remains of how access to university can remain open while maintaining the standards of excellence associated with higher education (Côté & Allahar, 2012).

Academic standards in massified universities may also be challenged by the potential mismatch between the number of faculty members and the number of students. Increasing student populations were not matched by increases in the number of faculty members in Canada,

with university professors reaching 29,080 in 1975 when student enrollment in universities was 371,000 (Statistics Canada, 2017e; Wisenthal, 2014). By 2010/2011, faculty had increased to 44,934, up 35% from 1975, but student populations had increased 63% over the same period (Statistics Canada, 2017e; The Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada, 2011). From 2010 to 2015, there was a 1.6% increase in academic-teaching staff, while student enrollment increased 7.5% during that time (Statistics Canada, 2017d). These statistics indicate the possibility for heightened student to teacher ratios, which may impact student learning, engagement, teaching methods, and academic standards (Allais, 2014; Côté & Allahar, 2012; Trow, 2000; Wang & Peck, 2013).

There also has been a shift toward credentialism and commercialization, processes that involve the view that students are customers and degrees are products (Côté & Allahar, 2012; Fisher, Metcalfe, & Field, 2016; Lee & Brotheridge, 2005; Maringe & de Wit, 2016; Maringe & Sing, 2014; Roksa & Robinson, 2016). In this view, liberal education institutions are argued to have transformed into vocational training institutions (Côté & Allahar, 2012; Murray, 2008; Trow, 1976). This transformation is problematic as the former are intended to cultivate the minds of students and broaden their perspective, while the latter involve more narrow skill-building for specific tasks or jobs (Côté & Allahar, 2012; Murray, 2008; Trow, 1976). These trends are fueled by employers' emphasis on higher education credentials as a means of determining who they will employ (Brown, 2016; Hout, 2012; Murray, 2008). Some scholars have argued that these shifts create a system of mass certification, rather than a system of mass higher education (Côté & Allahar, 2012). Others argue that an "academic capitalism" has redefined the public university as an organization that sells education (Fisher et al., 2016). Universities in their commercial form are rewarded through monetary gains, such as tuition or funding, for enrolling more students and

granting more degrees (Barbosa & Dwyer, 2016; Côté & Allahar, 2012). The basis of evaluation of schools becomes the number of graduates produced and contributions to the economic needs of the country, indicating that producing more graduates and granting more degrees is in the interest of higher education (Maringe & Sing, 2014; Roksa & Robinson, 2016).

Credentialism leads not only to increasing disadvantage for those who do not or cannot pursue university, but also contributes to the devaluing of higher education (Brown, 2016; Pickard, 2016). Some scholars argue that increasing accessibility has undermined the benefits or value of pursuing a higher education (Hayes & Wynyard, 2016). Those with a postsecondary education are generally able to obtain higher paid employment with more job security than individuals without a postsecondary degree (Hout, 2012; Murray, 2008; Schwartz & Kay, 2014). However, this is being undermined as a higher proportion of the population obtain higher education credentials, decreasing the value of these credentials (Allais, 2014; Brown, 2016; Côté & Allahar, 2012). This, in turn, creates pressure for the labour market to absorb mass amounts of graduates, generally resulting in graduates taking positions for which they are over-qualified (Allais, 2014; Côté & Allahar, 2012; Murray, 2008).

If massified universities focus on students as consumers, universities want to attract more students to their institution as schools are in competition with one another (Côté & Allahar, 2012; Maringe & Sing, 2014; Roksa & Robinson, 2016). Under this model, funding for university programs is closely tied to the return on investment of these programs, or the benefits for students and the institution (Hayes & Wynyard, 2016). Generally, science-based programs receive the highest levels of funding, as these programs are perceived as the most useful or beneficial (Côté & Allahar, 2012; Pickard, 2016). Funding is also tied to student perceptions of the utility or attractiveness of certain programs and whether these programs are bringing in more

students or interest (Côté & Allahar, 2012; Maringe & Sing, 2014; Polster, 2016; Roksa & Robinson, 2016). Universities maintain their reputation and success based on enrollment, so schools focus on providing programs or courses that will be attractive and interesting to students (Roksa & Robinson, 2016). In this view, it is suggested that for postsecondary institutions to be successful, they must be responsive to student preferences to garner more interest in their institution or programs (Côté & Allahar, 2012; Trow, 2000).

2.3 Individual Processes Associated with Massification

There are several individual level processes that are also associated with massification that may be direct or indirect outcomes of the structural processes outlined above. These include altered motivations for attending postsecondary school, large student populations and class sizes, student engagement or disengagement, and students' contact with faculty. These individual level outcomes are discussed below in terms of their impact on academic achievement, student adjustment or student experiences, and student well-being.

2.3.1 Motivations for Attending University

As access to university has increased, motivations for pursuing higher education have reflected the perceived need of postsecondary credentials to compete in the labour market (Allais, 2014; Côté & Allahar, 2012; Trow, 1974; Zelan, 1975). There are two broad categories of motivation for engaging in higher education, instrumental and intrinsic, that lead to different outcomes for knowledge production, satisfaction with university, and the development of critical thought (Allais, 2014; Côté & Allahar, 2012; Hickinbottom-Brawn & Burns, 2015; Lee & Brotheridge, 2005).

Intrinsic motivations for attending university involve pursuing a degree to develop further knowledge and opportunity, with a focus on knowledge as an end in itself (Allais, 2014; Côté &

Allahar, 2012). Allais (2014) notes that knowledge obtained in university is beyond what one might encounter in everyday life and that the university provides a space for students to think more critically about information. This author goes further to outline that, for intrinsically motivated students, engaging in higher education is less about the practical benefits in terms of competitiveness for the labour market, and more about the opportunity to learn. There is a desire among intrinsically motivated students to gain as much valuable knowledge on a topic of interest and to not censor any viewpoints (Côté & Allahar, 2012). Students who are intrinsically motivated generally have more positive affect, put more effort into their education, and privilege the process of learning, rather than the end product of a degree (Lee & Brotheridge, 2005).

Students may also attend university for instrumental reasons, such as gaining specialized knowledge that is perceived as necessary to engage in the labour market (Allais, 2014; Zelan, 1975). It is important to note that instrumental orientations exist on a continuum, where students may exhibit different degrees and different forms of this orientation, and as such, most students view their degree as a vehicle for labour market participation, at least in part (Lee & Brotheridge, 2005). Instrumentally motivated students feel that pursuing higher education gives them the best chance of obtaining well-paid employment, but they may view the information they encounter in class as unrelated to their career goals (Hockings, Cooke, Yamashita, McGinty, & Bowl, 2008). Engaging in university for instrumental reasons privileges technical skills over critical thinking (Hickinbottom-Brawn & Burns, 2015), which may devalue a university education and the learning process (Lee & Brotheridge, 2005). A Canadian study demonstrated that students with instrumental motivations are more likely to put in less effort at school, are more likely to resist academic demands and have negative attitudes toward learning, and are less likely to demonstrate effective learning (Lee & Brotheridge, 2005).

To date, there are only two studies that have linked motivations for attending university with student well-being. Hamilton Bailey and Phillips (2015) explored the relationship between mental illness and motivations for attending university among Australian students, and how this relationship impacts academic success and well-being. They found that motivational orientations accounted for significant variation in subjective well-being scores. Students who lacked intrinsic motivation tended to struggle to meet the social and emotional demands of university. In some cases, this led to unsuccessful integration into the university community. More positive affect was associated with an intrinsic motivation for attending university, or for obtaining more knowledge in a certain area, which translated into higher grades, higher life satisfaction, and better well-being on average (Hamilton Bailey & Phillips, 2015). A second study demonstrated that instrumental motivations may have an indirect negative impact on student well-being, as this type of motivation over-values extrinsic outcomes, which can be related to poor mental health (Lee & Brotheridge, 2005). These studies suggest that students who pursue higher education for instrumental reasons, or those who lack intrinsic motivation, may experience negative academic outcomes or may be at risk of developing or experiencing poor well-being.

2.3.2 Preferences and Outcomes Associated with Access and Class Size

More open access to universities implies that more people, including non-traditional students, have the opportunity to rise out of their class, or work toward the ‘American Dream’ of gaining or maintaining a middle-class lifestyle (McDonough & Miller, 2016; Trow, 1992). Research has also suggested that the benefits of higher education, such as better health, higher-paid employment, and greater family stability are felt more by non-traditional students than traditional students (Hout, 2012). However, research indicates that some non-traditional students, such as minority students, are still under-represented in universities, and these students tend to

gravitate toward schools that cost less and as such may transmit a lower quality education (Zelan, 1975). Additionally, some students enter university lacking the social and cultural capital that supports the transition (Holland, 2010; Lehmann, 2014). So, while access has increased and more students have the potential to benefit from the positive outcomes of obtaining a higher education, barriers to access still exist.

Increasing access tends to increase class sizes; however, there is conflicting evidence regarding student and faculty preferences for class size. Some past research conducted in the United States indicated that students prefer smaller classes of around 40 students, yet the average class size of the state university in that study was around 147 students (Feld & Grofman, 1977). Other research indicates that students and administrators have an interest in increasing class sizes, while faculty would prefer smaller, more in-depth classes with a smaller group of students (Guder et al., 2009). Today, first-year classes of over 600 students have become the norm at most public North American universities (Allais, 2014). Faculty have expressed concerns that increasing access, without comparable increases in funding and/or faculty, can push class sizes beyond optimal student to teacher ratios (Côté & Allahar, 2012). Heightened student to teacher ratios may have unintended consequences for students in terms of social interactions with faculty and other students, academics, or well-being.

Some research has pointed to a potential positive outcome of growing student populations and class sizes, namely the potential for students to engage with and learn from a more diverse student body. According to Trow (1974), the transformation to mass or universal higher education involves the diversification of student populations, which are more heterogeneous in terms of personal characteristics and academic goals. For example, globalization has led to greater internationalization of universities; however, internationalization may challenge

institutions to develop different teaching methods to address larger, more diverse student populations (Maringe & Sing, 2014). Heterogeneity may also increase access to more diverse viewpoints (Lin, 2017; Maringe & Sing, 2014) and specialized groups, clubs, and programs that may connect more diverse student populations to the institution (Maringe & Sing, 2014). Nevertheless, barriers still exist for racial minority or lower-income students to gain access to universities, and non-traditional students remain under-represented in student populations (Osborne, 2016).

2.3.2.1 Academic Outcomes Associated with Class Size

Empirical results regarding the impact of class size on academic achievement have generally been mixed. One study found that large class size negatively impacts student grade-point average (GPA), though this impact was marginal (Guder et al., 2009). However, this study was conducted on a smaller department, the School of Business Administration, at Loyola University in Chicago, where class sizes increased by 50% but remained quite small (Guder et al., 2009), which could make it a unique case for the impact of class size on student academic achievement. Large classes also impact academic outcomes other than student GPA, such as students' ability to participate. For example, research has indicated that large classes hinder students' willingness to discuss topics in class and have meaningful, direct contact with other students and professors (Beattie & Thiele, 2016; Guder et al., 2009; Maringe & Sing, 2014). Student participation may also be negatively impacted by teaching methods, as larger classes tend to be lecture-based, and this method of instruction may promote less class discussion (Feld & Grofman, 1977; Hickinbottom-Brawn & Burns, 2015). A review of literature on public universities worldwide indicated that students in large classes develop weaker skills in critical thinking, are more likely to drop-out in first-year, and report more dissatisfaction with their

classes (Maringe & Sing, 2014). In contrast, smaller classes provide the potential for seminar-based instruction, where students and professors have more personal contact and can engage with course material more critically (Feld & Grofman, 1977).

Large class sizes also have been shown to impact the university or class environment in other ways. One impact deals with attendance rates, with classes of around 40 having a 62% attendance rate, and this rate decreases as class size increases (Feld & Grofman, 1977). This may mean that students in large classes are negatively impacted academically due to missed content. Alternatively, class absences may decrease student contact with professors and other students that may be helpful in the learning process. Secondly, research suggests that class size affects the suitability of assignments, indicating that alterations must be made to engage and address large classes (Allais, 2014; Maringe & Sing, 2014; Wrench, Garrett, & King, 2013). For example, larger classes may necessitate different tactics for assessing student achievement, such as multiple choice exams, that may impact the amount of feedback professors can provide (Maringe & Sing, 2014). This lack of feedback may lead to student disengagement from the learning process and poor academic achievement (Maringe & Sing, 2014). Lastly, large classes may hinder students' ability to ask questions in the classroom, which may negatively impact their grades or their attendance (Maringe & Sing, 2014). Overall, students tend to rate larger classes and their professors much lower than smaller classes (Crittenden, Norr, & Lebailly, 1975).

The negative impact of increasing class size appears to be felt more by students who are deemed non-traditional, such as minority or first-generation students (Beattie & Thiele, 2016). For example, in the United States, when classes reach over 50 students, Hispanic male and female students have reductions of about 2% or more in their grades (Matta, Guzman, Stockly, & Widner, 2015). As well, as class size increases, the probability that first-generation students will

meet with their professors or teaching assistants outside of class greatly decreases (Beattie & Thiele, 2016). This lack of interaction hinders students' ability to form social networks with their professors (Beattie & Thiele, 2016). It may also hinder them academically, as not engaging with professors outside of class may have a negative impact on assignments, career goals, or the development of ideas and the pursuit of knowledge (Errey & Wood, 2011). On the other hand, larger classes provide more students with the opportunity to pursue a higher education (Guder et al., 2009; Trow, 1992). Given the trend toward more pressure on postsecondary institutions to increase enrollment, in effect increasing class sizes (Guder et al., 2009; Maringe & Sing, 2014), it is an important facet of massification that will inevitably impact student academic achievement in the future.

2.3.2.2 Connections to Student Well-being

The literature connecting greater access to university and class size to student well-being is sparse, especially research that seeks to relate student perceptions of class size and student well-being. The only research to discuss the association examines how increasing accessibility may result in different pathways of well-being or mental health for a more diverse student population (Kruisselbrink Flatt, 2013). For example, North American literature indicates that women are more likely to develop depression than men and are more likely to seek help for poor well-being or mental illness (Kruisselbrink Flatt, 2013). So, it is suggested that increases in poor well-being among students can be explained in part by the increasing proportion of women attending university (Durand-Bush, McNeill, Harding, & Dobransky, 2015). Most research discussing access and student well-being focuses on student engagement in larger classes and how this might impact their emotional health, which will be discussed in the following section.

The current study addresses this gap in the literature by examining how students interpret the impacts of class size and diversity on their well-being.

2.3.3 Student Engagement and Disengagement

Engagement broadly involves active participation in activities, having an interest in those activities, and devoting time and energy to them (Corbin & Baron, 2012). For academic engagement, this would include behavioural, emotional, and cognitive dimensions, such as following academic rules, enjoying the education process, and having an intrinsic motivation to learn (Corbin & Baron, 2012; Wang & Peck, 2013). For Corbin and Baron (2012), an engaged student is one who is fulfilled, hardworking, dedicated to their education, and sees themselves as a member of the learning community. Other scholars define academic engagement as active participation in the university community, through both attending class and meeting with faculty (Flynn, 2014). It is argued that students in a massified university context are becoming increasingly disengaged as universities grow and change (Corbin & Baron, 2012), with some students finding the current university environment to be alienating and unchallenging (Côté & Allahar, 2012). Although student disengagement is not a direct outcome of massification, it is thought to be fueled by the growth in and commercialization of universities (Côté & Allahar, 2012). In this environment, students are held less accountable for engaging in learning and are generally attending university to obtain a degree for employment (Côté & Allahar, 2012).

A culture of entitled student disengagement has been associated with massification, indicated by class absences, and prioritizing the social aspects of university over the academic while still expecting to receive average grades (Côté & Allahar, 2012; Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008). It is argued that this trend develops in high school and can carry through postsecondary school, which can lead to unprepared students entering universities (Côté

& Allahar, 2012). When measured by the number of hours that students devote to school work, there is evidence that some students treat their education like a part-time job, on average committing less than 30 hours per week to school work, with nearly half of students putting in only 10 hours of work per week (Côté & Allahar, 2012).

Research on student engagement and/or disengagement has assessed student outcomes related to both academic and social aspects of university. Student disengagement is linked to lower grades, less content retention, and higher drop-out rates in postsecondary school (Corbin & Baron, 2012). Student disengagement has also been linked to laptop use, as although laptops have become prevalent in universities as the normative note-taking method for students, they can result in distraction, disengagement, and lower retention when students use them (Côté & Allahar, 2012). Literature also indicates that students will learn better, receive higher grades, and have a better experience in higher education when they are challenged and engaged (Corbin & Baron, 2012; Côté & Allahar, 2012). In this view, disengaged students are more likely to have instrumental orientations to university, which may lead to further disengagement for individual students (Lee & Brotheridge, 2005). However, disengagement is also argued to have the potential to poison the learning environment, leading other students to disengage (Lee & Brotheridge, 2005).

Several arguments have been proposed in the literature as to why students have become increasingly disengaged. Côté and Allahar (2012) provide a detailed critique of each argument. First, some scholars argue that students have complex and busy lives, finding it hard to juggle school work and other obligations, such as part-time work. However, Côté and Allahar note that this view demeans the value of a university education implying that students are too busy to learn. At the same time, statistical analyses of time use indicate that working for pay, even at

high levels, takes only a few hours away from study time, because the study-time demands are currently low in general for all students. Second, others have argued that disengagement is not new and currently is the result of students becoming increasingly bored in an unchallenging system. Côté and Allahar rebut that while disengagement is not new, it is exacerbated in a massified university system, where students now not only disengage but also feel entitled to high grades for limited effort. Third, yet other observers postulate that disengagement does not exist. However, based on the NSSE data (presented below), where students self-report low levels of study time, it is quite clear that this form of disengagement exists and impacts students. Lastly, some scholars have placed the blame on educators for student disengagement, arguing that professors have been unsuccessful in keeping the attention of their students. According to Côté and Allahar (2012), this argument ignores the bilateral contract between students and professors necessary for student success in higher education. In sum, although several arguments have been proposed in the literature that attempt to normalize student disengagement, the above counter-arguments point to a more complicated picture as to why so many university students are currently disengaged.

2.3.3.1 Academic and Social Engagement

Engagement has been documented as an important factor that influences academic achievement. For example, one study found that engagement explains 13% of the variation in first-year university grades (Kuh et al., 2008). Another study indicated that engagement beyond first-year reliably predicts degree attainment; when engagement in the third-year of postsecondary school is high, students are more likely to complete their degrees (Flynn, 2014). Svanum and Bigatti (2009) found that engagement in university requires a great degree of effort in terms of attending classes, completing readings, and participating in the learning process, and

that this effort translates into more academic success for students. They also found that students with high academic engagement were more likely to receive high grades, obtain postsecondary credentials, and graduate sooner than their disengaged peers. Furthermore, students who were more involved in their courses and in completing assignments in university tended to graduate one semester earlier than their disengaged peers (Svanum & Bigatti, 2009).

Despite better learning outcomes for engaged students, there has been a trend in recent years toward more disengagement, with institutions recognizing that students are entering university unprepared and unwilling to do the academic work or to attend classes (Corbin & Baron, 2012; Errey & Wood, 2011). Data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) suggests, for example, that 60 to 70% of student populations exhibit some degree of disengagement (Côté & Allahar, 2012). This becomes problematic when we consider that although engaged students, who spend significantly more hours per week studying than other students, are more likely to receive A grades (Côté & Allahar, 2012; Kuh et al., 2008), one-third of disengaged students also receive A grades (Côté & Allahar, 2012). This suggests that students can receive the same degree or grade with varying levels of engagement (Côté & Allahar, 2012). In turn, university graduates who have the same degree may have very different skill sets; in fact, engaged students do report that they develop better critical thinking skills than their disengaged peers (Côté & Allahar, 2012). This may also suggest that, in the current era, academic achievement is only partially explained by time spent studying, with other factors contributing to obtaining A-grades, such as meeting with professors outside of class and having an interest in the topic of study (Allais, 2014; Corbin & Baron, 2010; Hockings et al., 2008).

Côté and Allahar (2012) outline and discuss further NSSE data on the engagement of students in both the United States and Canada. This data shows that disengaged postsecondary

students outnumber their engaged counterparts in both countries, although students in the United States appear to be less engaged overall in comparison to those in Canada. Young males living in residence appear to be the most disengaged. In terms of the activities that influence student engagement, the NSSE shows that socializing with peers has the largest negative effect on studying for classes. Furthermore, busier students, or those engaged in extracurricular activities or work on-campus, tend to study more, suggesting that other obligations do not always translate into less engagement. Finally, the NSSE shows that, even at smaller schools, disengagement is high, suggesting that school size and type are not good predictors of student disengagement (Côté & Allahar, 2012).

Some students appear unwilling to engage in classes through a lack of participation, as they are reluctant to share knowledge or are fearful of being wrong (Hockings et al., 2008). This could be related to the social component of university as well, as students who report more social anxiety feel that this anxiety may be hindering their ability to participate in classes, which negatively impacts academic achievement (Brook & Willoughby, 2015). Lack of social ties or heightened social anxiety may also limit the amount of academic resources and emotional support that students may garner from their social networks (Alarcon et al., 2011; Brook & Willoughby, 2015). Furthermore, as universities have grown, teacher to student ratios have also increased, and the inability of students and faculty to forge meaningful connections may impact students' willingness to engage in the learning environment (Côté & Allahar, 2012). This becomes problematic when classes become so large that formative or helpful feedback is unavailable to students (Allais, 2014). Insufficient feedback may lead students to become disengaged, especially when met with complex ideas, as they may feel they cannot understand the content or do not receive help to do so (Allais, 2014; Hockings et al., 2008).

Academic engagement is closely related to social engagement, as both are important for degree attainment and persistence in higher education and these two types of engagement can compensate for one another (Flynn, 2014). Social engagement can involve participation in groups, clubs, organizations, and sports teams on university campuses, as well as contact with faculty and other students in and outside of the classroom related to academic matters and more personal discussions (Flynn, 2014). This becomes increasingly difficult in the current university system; for example, research has demonstrated that the larger the class, the more difficult it is for professors to sustain interest and engagement while lecturing, as well as to meet face-to-face with students outside of class (Allais, 2014; Corbin & Baron, 2012). Furthermore, students in larger classes have been shown to disengage from lecture-style classes, due to potential distractions from other students (Allais, 2014). In these instances, pressure generally falls on professors to re-engage students who are experiencing a loss of focus in class (Corbin & Baron, 2012). However, research has acknowledged that social engagement is reciprocal, much like academic engagement, where students must attend available office hours, make appointments to discuss material, and create or work with study groups with their peers (Flynn, 2014).

2.3.3.2 Teaching Methods, Technology, and Student Engagement

As previously mentioned, larger classes implemented without substantial increases in funding require different teaching methods, such as larger, lecture-style classes (Beattie & Thiele, 2016; Côté & Allahar, 2012). Larger lectures are often facilitated by technology and involve less meaningful contact between professors and students (Allais, 2014; Côté & Allahar, 2012; Trow, 2000; Trow, 2006). This is troublesome because students report a preference for nurturing lectures, which involve academic support from their teachers and perceptions of the classroom as an encouraging place to develop ideas (Errey & Wood, 2011). Hickinbottom-

Brawn and Burns (2015) discuss how first-year classes aimed at memorization, retention, and entertainment, have become a common teaching approach in North American universities. These authors note that while the goal of these classes may be to increase engagement and academic success, this approach has been shown to perpetuate the culture of disengagement when it is used as universally applicable to programs or courses. Hickinbottom-Brawn and Burns also posit that these classes allow students who enter with poor writing or reading skills to disengage from learning while receiving passing grades. Furthermore, they argue that these classes provide students with a more vocational form of education, lessening the value of a university education, and allowing students to pass through this institution without gaining the critical skills associated with postsecondary school. (Hickinbottom-Brawn & Burns, 2015).

Bennett (2016) argued that a push for technological changes in teaching arose in the 1990s in response to a desire for more interactive media approaches to higher education. Some have questioned whether technology can be implemented to help address the needs of students in a massified university system at a low cost (Corbin & Baron, 2012; Côté & Allahar, 2012). Other forms of technological advances in higher education include clickers, which are electronic devices used to encourage class participation in larger lecture classes through exercises such as polls, and podcasts that may be assigned as optional or additional resources for students (Côté & Allahar, 2012). Both advances have drawbacks, as clickers generally do not aid in the development of critical thought through electronic participation, and podcasts may go unnoticed by students, especially those who are disengaged (Côté & Allahar, 2012).

While technology has introduced many possibilities for higher education and student engagement and may be used effectively to supplement traditional teaching methods or as alternatives in some cases, there are several issues with implementing technology in the

classroom (Allais, 2014). First, the physical gathering of faculty and students is important for learning and engagement, as it provides students and teachers with an avenue for direct contact (Allais, 2014). Second, although students have access to a wealth of knowledge through the internet, scholars argue that higher education should involve the development of the necessary skills to critically assess, analyze, and understand this information (Allais, 2014; Côté & Allahar, 2012). There also has been an increase in dependence on technology and social media, which may challenge the implementation of technology in classrooms and may suggest that technological methods serve as a distraction that may negatively impact student engagement (Kruisselbrink Flatt, 2013). Lastly, some have argued that students are digital natives who are comfortable with technology because they were brought up with it, and as such integrating technology into higher education would be beneficial (Bennett, 2016; Côté & Allahar, 2012). While some students may be digital natives, there is still a digital divide based on SES where challenges exist for those of lower SES to afford new technology that is developed (Bennett, 2016). In this view, not all students enter postsecondary school with the same level of familiarity with technology, so the implementation and efficacy of technology in the classroom would vary based on individual student experiences (Bennett, 2016; Côté & Allahar, 2012).

2.3.3.3 Connections to Student Well-being

There are only two studies that examine student engagement and well-being. Lumby (2012) focused on the engagement of adolescents rather than postsecondary students, but suggests that there are factors associated with learning environments that students perceive as negatively impacting their ability to engage. These factors, in turn, negatively impact student happiness and students' perceptions of their ability to succeed. Some students in Lumby's study recognized their disengagement and felt that the school context, such as perceptions of teachers

as uncaring or perceiving the learning environment and its requirements as too demanding, played a role in fostering disengaged behaviours. Although this study was conducted with adolescents, it still outlines a very clear relationship between student perceptions of the school environment, disengagement, and student well-being.

Wang and Peck (2013) examined how mental health outcomes vary across engagement profiles by looking at the cognitive, behavioural, and emotional aspects of engagement for high school students. Framing their study was the idea that student engagement impacts psychological well-being and adjustment in school. Most students in their study were moderately engaged in all three aspects, while students who were highly engaged, minimally engaged, emotionally disengaged, and cognitively disengaged were similarly prevalent in the sample. Students who, in the 9th grade, exhibited signs of emotional disengagement, or minimal engagement in cognitive, behavioural, and emotional aspects were more likely to report depression. In contrast, highly engaged students were least likely to report depression (Wang & Peck, 2013). Although Wang and Peck focused on an environment outside of the university, they still point to an important relationship between student engagement profiles and mental health.

In conclusion, this chapter has established that changes in university structures have been accompanied by micro level changes that have affected students. In the literature, these micro level changes have been well-documented in their relationship with student academic outcomes, such as GPA, degree completion, attendance rates, and time spent studying. Although some research has examined how students perceive the context of university, and how this context impacts their well-being, this research tends to be conducted outside of Canada or on other student populations, such as high school students. Largely absent from the literature are studies

that have asked Canadian university students about their perceptions of the context of a massified university system and how this environment impacts their well-being.

Chapter 3

3 Literature Review: Student Well-being and Access to Resources

Student well-being has become a pervasive and necessary focus on university campuses across the globe. More students are entering university with pre-existing struggles, or are developing poor well-being during university (Adlaf, Gliksman, Demers, & Newton-Taylor, 2001; Knowlden, Hackman, & Sharma, 2016; Kruisselbrink Flatt, 2013; Laidlaw, McLellan, & Ozakinci, 2016; Martin, 2010). Research demonstrates that the transition to university is a stressful time for students. The age period 18 to 24 is also the normative time for the development of certain mental health problems (Knowlden et al., 2016; Kruisselbrink Flatt, 2013; Laidlaw et al., 2016; Nunes et al., 2014). In this chapter, I outline how student well-being is typically measured in the literature, along with other factors, such as parental relationships or self-image and identity, that may affect well-being. Research will be outlined that discusses the relationship between well-being and academic outcomes, along with the limited research connecting student well-being to the university context.

This chapter will also review research on the availability of mental health resources on university campuses and how students perceive these resources in terms of awareness, adequacy, and usefulness. Research indicates that although students are aware of on-campus resources, many are underusing the resources that are available to them. Students' explanations for this underuse will also be discussed. Literature presented below also points to some potential avenues for integrating these resources more seamlessly into the university structure.

3.1 Student Well-being

Research from the 1990s found that students in 1992 reported less satisfaction and

happiness overall than students in 1984 in both the United States and Canada (Staats, Armstrong-Stassen, & Partilo, 1995). More recent research has suggested that poor well-being has become more prevalent for university students. For example, between 2006 and 2011 there was a 67% increase in poor mental health among students in the U (Condra, Dineen, Gills, Jack-Davies, & Condra, 2015). Universities are beginning to monitor student mental health, and there is evidence that it is declining. For example, a large Canadian university found a 15% increase in students' experience of stress that impacts their academics, and a 12% increase in reports of student anxiety impacting academics from 2013 to 2016 (Student Mental Health and Wellness Advisory Committee, 2018).

The normative timing of postsecondary education in the life course coincides with the timing of typical disorder manifestation during ages 18 to 24 (Knowlden et al., 2016; Kruisselbrink Flatt, 2013; Laidlaw et al., 2016; Nunes et al., 2014). Those aged 15 to 24 are at an increased risk of experiencing mental health struggles such as anxiety, stress, or depression (Condra et al., 2015). As a result, about 13 to 18% of Canadian adolescents suffer from a mental illness in any given year (Kruisselbrink Flatt, 2013). Given the stage of the life course at which potential poor well-being is most likely to occur, students may enter postsecondary school with pre-existing mental health disorders and/or may be at an increased risk of developing poor well-being due to the potential for stress and pressure in postsecondary school (Adlaf et al., 2001; Knowlden et al., 2016; Kruisselbrink Flatt, 2013; Laidlaw et al., 2016; Martin, 2010).

Students do appear to be at an increased risk of experiencing elevated stress levels in comparison to the general population (Bore, Pittolo, Kirby, Dluzewska, & Marlin, 2015). About 30% of students report psychological distress, with the highest percentage in Ontario (Durand-Bush et al., 2015). In fact, many students report feelings of constant strain and unhappiness or

depression (Adlaf et al., 2001). Student distress may be the result of academic pressure, financial burden associated with the cost of higher education, or lifestyle behaviours, such as unhealthy eating habits or alcohol over-consumption, during university (Adlaf et al., 2001; Kruisselbrink Flatt, 2013). Students who report feelings of anxiety and/or depression also report exhaustion from loss of sleep, which may negatively impact their ability to complete assignments and attend classes (Martin, 2010). These students also report a loss of confidence or feelings of failure that may make participating in classes more difficult (Martin, 2010). This can lead to more serious negative impacts, as students who experience mental illness are at an increased risk of dropping out of postsecondary school (Condra et al., 2015).

Most research on student well-being aims to identify factors that predict the onset of stress, psychological distress, or poor well-being. For example, research has demonstrated that students who are female, have high family incomes, and have high academic goals are more likely to have positive well-being (Adlaf et al., 2001; Chow, 2007; Fink, 2014). Research also indicates that subjective well-being is generally high when the basic needs of love, belonging, power, freedom, and survival are met (Türkdoğan & Duru, 2012). As well, students who report greater family bonds or social support, less academic stress, and spend more hours studying are less likely to experience poor well-being (Chow, 2007).

Outside of the university setting, research demonstrates that there are familial impacts on student well-being. At a basic level, parental education predicts student well-being or psychological distress scores, and fathers' postsecondary attainment is particularly beneficial (Chow, 2007). However, this history of higher education in the family may make students feel that their parents pushed them to attend university or to have high academic success, and this may negatively impact their well-being (Fagan, 1994; Kruisselbrink Flatt, 2013). Furthermore,

student perceptions of the quality of communication with parents impacts how they rate their well-being (Sax & Weintraub, 2014). Although female students are more likely to be in contact with both parents than their male counterparts, male students have significantly higher emotional well-being ratings on average (Sax & Weintraub, 2014). This indicates that contact with parents may not have an equal impact on well-being for both genders (Sax & Weintraub, 2014).

As well, students who report less financial stress overall tend to rate their well-being more positively than those who report high financial stress, and this economic tension does not appear to decrease over time (Bore et al., 2015; Chow, 2007; Flynn & MacLeod, 2015). As tuition costs have increased pushing more students to require financial aid and subsequently acquire debt, the amount of stress that students feel may increase (Kruisselbrink Flatt, 2013). Financial stress contributes to poor well-being, low emotional resilience, and poor mental health (Fagan, 1994; Bore et al., 2015). This may be related to SES or family income, as financial security is linked to higher family income or higher SES, which in turn is linked to better well-being (Chow, 2007; Flynn & MacLeod, 2015).

Student happiness, which is closely related to well-being, appears to be most influenced by students' self-image (Flynn & MacLeod, 2015), as self-esteem and optimism influence students' ratings of their well-being (Knowlden et al., 2016). Optimism has been shown to predict positive psychological health; when optimism is high, distress is generally low (Burris, Brechtiny, Salsman, & Carlton, 2009; Knowlden et al., 2016). Optimism is also linked to self-esteem (Knowlden et al., 2016), which is a trait that directly influences happiness as students who report high self-esteem also report more happiness (Staats et al., 1995). University can be a site for the development of positive self-esteem and self-image, giving students a purpose and the motivation to work toward a goal (Finley, 2016). However, and as noted previously, this

environment can also be a site for stress and pressure that may negatively impact students' self-esteem, self-image, and ultimately their overall happiness (Adlaf et al., 2001; Bore et al., 2015; Knowlden et al., 2016; Kruisselbrink Flatt, 2013; Martin, 2010; Wrench et al., 2013).

Student well-being has also been considered in its relationship to academic success and degree completion. About 7% of student happiness can be accounted for by variation in academic success, rendering academics an important aspect for student well-being (Flynn & MacLeod, 2015). This statistic also indicates that there are other factors, such as those presented above, that impact student happiness. The direction of the relationship between student happiness and academic achievement is unknown, such that student happiness may impact academic achievement or vice versa (Flynn & MacLeod, 2015). A large proportion of students who report struggling with poor well-being or mental illness also report lower postsecondary completion rates (Fink, 2014; Martin, 2010). Ennals, Fossey, and Howie (2015) conducted a meta-synthesis of qualitative research on student well-being in all forms of postsecondary education. They found that student well-being impacts students' negotiation of the social spaces in university and completion of the academic work required. Furthermore, they found that struggling with mental illness or poor well-being can negatively impact a student's ability to complete academic work unless students are able to develop effective coping strategies (Ennals et al., 2015). While the studies in this section point to factors predicting student happiness, well-being, or mental distress, what is missing here is a consideration of how students perceive the context of massification or the university, and how they think this context impacts their well-being.

3.1.1 Student Perceptions and Considering the Context

Factors associated with massification have been linked to negative academic outcomes for students. However, less understood is how students understand this context as shaping their

experiences at university, and how they relate the factors associated with massification to perceptions of their well-being. Finley (2016) noted that the university environment is a site for the development of positive self-esteem and purpose. Finley found that when university communities foster these feelings, students tend to have higher well-being through understanding the value of their contributions in university and the development of a positive self-image. In a study on university students in Taiwan, Lin (2017) found that students conceptualize their well-being in terms of interactions with peers, teachers, and family members, in addition to academic success, which may point to other factors that impact student happiness outside of academics. Lin's study also suggests that students view the expansion of university campuses and growth in student populations as positive, giving them access to more diverse viewpoints. Students viewed this diversity in social interactions as positively impacting their perceptions of their well-being (Lin, 2017). Other research has suggested that satisfaction with college, or the quality of college life (QCL) plays a large role in student well-being regardless of school size and public or private status (Sirgy, Grzeskowiak, & Rahtz, 2007). Satisfaction with the academic and social aspects of college results in a positive QCL, and this is influenced by satisfaction with college services and facilities (Sirgy et al., 2007).

Other research demonstrates that supportive academic environments foster a sense of belonging to the institution, decreasing psychological distress (Fink, 2014; Laidlaw et al., 2016; Knowlden et al., 2016). Supportive academic environments provide students with social support, and opportunities to engage with faculty and other students both in and outside of the classroom (Fink, 2014; Knowlden et al., 2016). These types of environments are more prevalent on campuses located in rural communities, and on campuses where resources, such as peer group support networks, are available for student use (Laidlaw et al., 2016). Inclusive and supportive

environments may foster high emotional well-being, high self-confidence, or high social well-being that can mitigate feelings of anxiety or stress that some college students may experience (Fagan, 1994; Fink, 2014). In conjunction with this, research has identified differences across departments and faculties; for example, students in medicine-related departments report more stress due to a much heavier course load (Laidlaw et al., 2016). Competition within departments can lead to more pressure on students to complete the work and excel, with little time to focus on their well-being (Laidlaw et al., 2016).

In addition, there is some evidence that feelings of well-being change over the course of a student's time in university. For example, research conducted in the United Kingdom indicates that stress may be highest during the transition to university, with psychological well-being peaking at around the halfway point of a 4-year undergraduate degree (Cooke, Bewick, Barkham, Bradley, & Audin, 2006). This change in well-being during university may be due to changes in social support, subjective social status, and/or a perception of the university community as supportive (Rubin, Evans, & Wilkinson, 2016). As students spend more time in university, they have more social contact with peers and forge social bonds, both of which are protective factors against the development of depression, anxiety, and/or stress (Rubin et al., 2016). The above research suggests that student well-being does not remain constant during university, and this may be due to changing perceptions of the context of university and social relationships as students move through this institution.

Wrench and colleagues (2013) studied the social conditions of first-year in an Australian university through open-ended surveys to analyze how students experienced the transition to university and their first-year. These authors suggest that there is something about the context of university that may impact students' well-being through unpreparedness for large classes and the

disconnect of students and teachers, frustration in a new environment, lower grades, and insufficient feedback in larger classes. Wrench et al. suggest that the context of university is impactful, as due to the demands of school and large classes, students reported poor sleep patterns, stress, isolation, and alienation. During this time, social support from friends and family was an important protective factor to help students through their times of stress (Wrench et al., 2013). Wrench et al. (2013) address many of the factors associated with massification, without using the term. However, their study was conducted in Australia and as such the current study extends this to a Canadian context and provides additional information on other factors associated with massification, such as disengagement of students.

3.2 Mental Health Resources

The adequacy and sufficiency of resources that are available on-campus have the potential to influence students' perceptions of their well-being. Increasing numbers of students experience poor mental health or poor well-being at the transition to and during university, challenging universities to create new resources for students (Condra et al., 2015; Kruisselbrink Flatt, 2013; Schwartz & Kay, 2014). There is evidence that universities have increased mental health and counselling resources to help students navigate the postsecondary education system; however, these resources may not fully address student demand due to potential funding challenges (Heck et al., 2014; Schwartz & Kay, 2014).

3.2.1 Accessibility and Adequacy of On-campus Mental Health Resources

As mentioned previously, research indicates that, from 2006 to 2011, there was a 67% increase in the prevalence of poor mental health for university students in the United States (Condra et al., 2015). This statistic suggests that more students are entering higher education

having experienced or are at risk of experiencing poor well-being (Condra et al., 2015; Schwartz & Kay, 2014). In the United States, mental health centres on university campuses have contact with more than 30% of students (Schwartz & Kay, 2014). As well, around 70% of centres across the United States have reported an increase in the number of students accessing these services for behavioural problems or psychological medication over time (Schwartz & Kay, 2014). This presents a unique challenge for universities to develop more on-campus resources as more students are accessing these resources, placing a financial burden on institutions (Kruisselbrink Flatt, 2013). This also challenges universities to develop resources that are appropriate for a more varied audience, which can be difficult when considering funding constraints in higher education (Côté & Allahar, 2012; Kraft, 2011; Kruisselbrink Flatt, 2013; Maringe & Sing, 2014).

There is some evidence that as universities have expanded, additional mental health resources have been developed on university campuses (Heck et al., 2014; Kraft, 2011). Kraft (2011) argues that universities in the United States began implementing mental health resources in the early 1900's in response to more students dropping out of postsecondary school due to emotional or personal problems. Kraft also notes that, within the last 40 years, more sophisticated resources involving prevention have been implemented in universities. Despite this recent growth, some services are still more difficult to access due to fees, and there continues to be a heavier focus on medication than on psychological services (Kraft, 2011). Although schools have developed more small-scale mental health centres on campuses, only 1/3 of existing centres on United States campuses have increased their staff and only 60% have on-site psychiatrists (Schwartz & Kay, 2014).

In Canada, the type and amount of resources that a university provides for students is related to the size of the institution (Heck et al., 2014). For example, Heck et al. (2014) found

that medium and large universities tend to have more on-campus resources available for student use than small campuses. Furthermore, these authors note that larger university campuses are more likely to have counselling services and on-site psychologists in comparison to smaller campuses. Heck et al. also suggest that universities most often develop outreach initiatives that promote awareness of resources and encourage student use, as well as focused initiatives that are specific to certain groups on campuses, such as Aboriginal student groups or LGBT groups. Although most students report they are aware of the resources available to them and feel comfortable discussing their mental health with staff and on-campus psychologists, there are some student concerns with on-campus resources. For example, 86% of students report that their university could benefit from developing better outreach programs, where students would be more easily connected to the resources that are available to them (Heck et al., 2014).

Half of students who report experiencing struggles with their mental health access private insurance through their family (Martin, 2010). This may point to some inadequacies in on-campus mental health resources, or a preference for off-campus services. Most universities and colleges in Canada provide students with health insurance, which may help them with access services on or off-campus for free or at a reduced cost (Nunes et al., 2014). Although many universities cover a substantial amount of health costs for students, counselling has a \$300 maximum coverage on average (Nunes et al., 2014). This coverage may only allow one or two counselling visits, and generally requires a physician's referral, which may deter some students from accessing this resource (Nunes et al., 2014). Due to restricted budgets or funding, nearly 90% of on-campus resources refer their patients to off-campus services; 57% of large institutions provide students with access to an on-site psychiatrist, and this value decreases significantly as institutions become smaller (Heck et al., 2014). Only 17% of university mental health centres

provide a full assessment during an initial visit, only 36% have a follow-up system in place, and only 22% provide long-term care (Heck et al., 2014). Overall, resources on campuses may not provide comprehensive aid to students (Heck et al., 2014) as there are potential barriers to accessing resources as well as limits to the types of services that students can access on-campus.

Some scholars have suggested that schools should develop mental health programs or courses that target students' abilities to self-regulate and develop mastery to help them manage their own well-being (Condra et al., 2015; Durand-Bush et al., 2015). Elsewhere it is argued that mental health initiatives should be integrated into course work, with students indicating that course curriculum infused with lessons about suicide prevention and overall positive mental health would be relevant and helpful (Mitchell, Darrow, Haggerty, & Neill, 2012). Lastly, some scholars have argued that preventative measures would be the most beneficial. For example, it is suggested that medical histories should be gathered from first-year students, as these records may be helpful in identifying students who are at risk of developing poor well-being, and/or students who may benefit from accessing on-campus resources (Heck et al., 2014).

3.2.2 Help Seeking Behaviours

There is some evidence that a low proportion of Canadians with a mental illness seek treatment (Stead, Shanahan, & Neufeld, 2010). This trend has also been noted in other parts of the world, as studies have shown that across several countries, the prevalence of mental illness ranges from 4 to 26%, while those accessing treatment ranges from 1 to 15% (Jagdeo, Cox, Stein, & Sareen, 2009). Although more postsecondary students are experiencing poor well-being and high levels of psychological distress, there appears to be a disconnect between those students experiencing mental distress or poor well-being and those who access on-campus resources (Cooke et al., 2006; Durand-Bush et al., 2015; Jagdeo et al., 2009; Nunes et al., 2014; Schwartz

& Kay, 2014; Stead et al., 2010). Despite more students accessing resources on-campus and accessing them more often, especially in the United States (Schwartz & Kay, 2014), these resources are still underused by students on average (Cooke et al., 2006; Jagdeo et al., 2009; Nunes et al., 2014; Schwartz & Kay, 2014; Stead et al., 2010; Yorgason, Linville, & Zitzman, 2008). Estimates of the proportion of students with poor well-being who access on-campus resources ranges from about half (Martin, 2010), to only 17% of students (Yorgason et al., 2008).

There are more informal resources that students can access, such as accommodation for exams and discussing their struggles with professors to receive extensions (Martin, 2010). Informal accommodations can be quite difficult for students to access, because if symptoms or struggles occur unexpectedly they may need accommodation after a deadline has passed, but accommodation after the fact is uncommon (Condra et al., 2015). There is an Ontario Human Rights Code that provides universities with a duty to accommodate student needs without undue hardship (Condra et al., 2015). However, informal accommodations are both professor and institution specific and as such there is little consistency in these procedures across universities (Condra et al., 2015). It has been shown that larger universities provide more access to accommodation than smaller institutions (Heck et al., 2014). Furthermore, informal accommodations are better accessed by students who have access to other resources, either through themselves or their families, that would help them to better navigate the requirements for pursuing such accommodations, such as knowledge of their legal rights or knowledge of the avenues that can be taken to receive accommodation (Condra et al., 2015; Martin, 2010).

There is some evidence of a relationship between stress level and likelihood of seeking help (Durand-Bush et al., 2015; Stead et al., 2010; Yorgason et al., 2008). However, other personal factors may influence a student's willingness to seek help. For example, students who

are male, young, tend to procrastinate, and those who use drugs consistently are more likely to have negative attitudes toward help seeking (Jagdeo et al., 2009; Stead et al., 2010). Students who have used resources in the past are significantly more likely to use them in the future (Jagdeo et al., 2009). Many students report that they would access resources if it were necessary, but also show negative attitudes toward using resources for emotional problems (Jagdeo et al., 2009). Overall, students who access mental health resources tend to have lower levels of psychological distress (Martin, 2010). With the high prevalence of poor well-being in university students, it is important to understand why some students are underusing resources.

Research shows that there are several reasons why students may have negative attitudes toward help-seeking. Many students claim that they have negative attitudes toward help-seeking because they do not need to use these services (Cooke et al., 2006; Yorgason et al., 2008) or that they feel these services would not be helpful for their specific struggles (Yorgason et al., 2008). Other scholars argue that students experiencing certain mental health struggles are less likely to access resources because of the invisible nature of their struggles (Martin, 2010). Condra et al. (2015) note that there could also be stigma associated with accessing mental health resources that deters students from using them. This could be in the form of social-stigma from peers as students may be labeled as mentally ill if they reach out for help. It could also be in the form of self-stigma, where students may internalize the stereotypes associated with their struggles leading them to view help seeking as unnecessary or unhelpful (Condra et al., 2015).

Some students may be unaware of the resources that are available to them through their university. A regional study in the United States found that one third of students had never heard of services, and another third reported hearing about services but receiving little information on them (Yorgason et al., 2008). This study showed that students report hearing about on-campus

services from other students or advertisements on the internet, which may point to a potential miscommunication between institutions and students pertaining to these resources. As well, students who are more aware of resources tend to be female, living on-campus, and in their upper years of university (Yorgason et al., 2008). Furthermore, students who do not have access to health insurance, either through their institution or privately, show more negative attitudes for help seeking as these services tend to be quite costly (Jagdeo et al., 2009).

Students may also access resources other than on-campus services, and may successfully maintain their well-being using these resources. For example, some scholars have argued that students may not need to use on-campus resources because they regulate their own well-being using other internal resources (Bovier, Chamot, & Perneger, 2004; Durand-Bush et al., 2015; Martin, 2010). Self-regulation and mastery are both personal characteristics that may buffer against or mitigate poor well-being, so students who have developed these skills may not need to access on-campus resources (Bovier et al., 2004; Durand-Bush et al., 2015). Mastery tends to develop in the later years of university, so students in first-year who have lower levels of mastery could be at a disadvantage for successfully managing their well-being (Durand-Bush et al., 2015). Furthermore, a lack of the development of mastery may be related to motivational orientations toward education. In this view, students who are attending university for instrumental reasons, such as obtaining a degree to engage in the labour market, may not develop the mastery necessary to successfully navigate postsecondary school or their well-being (Lee & Brotheridge, 2005).

Furthermore, students who have adequate social support networks are better able to navigate their well-being (Bovier et al., 2004; Martin, 2010). Social support can come in the form of encouragement and understanding from family and friends, although students report

feeling like they are burdening their family or friends when discussing personal concerns with them (Martin, 2010). Social support can also come in the form of informal and personal conversation and aid from professors (Condra et al., 2015). However, faculty report feeling uneasy about their role in supporting students through struggles with their mental health if they feel they have a lack of training in this area (Condra et al., 2015).

In conclusion, this chapter has outlined how student well-being is traditionally measured in the literature, noted the academic outcomes associated with poor student well-being, and pointed out the potential for students to be at an increased risk of developing poor well-being while in university. Research was also examined concerning student use, awareness, and perceptions of the adequacy of on-campus resources. Some potential explanations for underuse or negative attitudes toward help-seeking were noted. Although some research has connected the university environment to student well-being and resource-use, this research has been largely conducted outside of Canada and on school environments other than universities. Accordingly, more research is needed that examines how Canadian students perceive the university environment as contributing to their well-being, positively or negatively, and in what ways.

Chapter 4

4 Research Methodology

The goal of this study is to provide an analysis of the narratives of second and third-year students enrolled at a large Canadian university to understand their perceptions of the university context and how students perceive this environment as impacting their well-being. Previous research largely analyzes trends in higher education to understand how the current university environment impacts students, primarily academically. The current study aims to extend this research to the viewpoint of students, to see whether students directly recognize the factors associated with massification and how they see these factors as impacting their or other students' well-being in a variety of ways. This chapter will detail the guiding research questions, the design of the study, site selection, participant selection and inclusion/exclusion criteria, the research instruments used, as well as data collection and analysis processes.

4.1 Research Questions

The following research questions guide the study:

- 1) How do students perceive the massified university context?
 - a. Do they recognize the factors associated with massification at their university?
 - b. How do they describe the context of the university system and their place within it?
- 2) How do students conceptualize their well-being in relation to the factors associated with massification, such as growing student populations and class sizes, student disengagement, available resources, the instrumental value of higher education, and contact with faculty?

4.2 Methodology and Design of the Study

To address these research questions, students were interviewed about their first-hand experiences and perceptions of the university environment. This qualitative approach is well-suited to contribute to the literature on this topic, as most research on massification tends to be quantitative, and as such may miss important aspects of how students perceive the university environment and its impacts. Previous literature also does not address whether students acknowledge the factors associated with massification and how they view these factors as impacting their well-being, which is an important avenue that the current study focuses on. Lastly, the current study provides a Canadian context for research on massification, which is largely conducted in the United States. Below is a discussion of the design of this study in terms of the university chosen, the participants involved, and the instruments used.

4.2.1 Site Selection

This study took place at a large public research university in Ontario, Canada. In the literature review, data from Statistics Canada were used to situate Canadian higher education within the process of massification. These trends established Canadian higher education as currently in the mass stage of higher education and indicated that a large research university in Canada was an appropriate site to study the effects of massification on students and student well-being. Given the great variability in trends in higher education across Canadian provinces and territories, it is important to note that Ontario has the highest university enrollment rates in the country, making it an appropriate site to study the process of massification and its effects (Universities Canada, 2016). The particular university of interest has enrollment rates that are on par with or exceed national averages, indicating it is a good representation of higher education in Canada (Universities Canada, 2016).

4.2.2 Participant Selection

Participation was limited to second and third-year students enrolled at the university of interest, as these students had experience within the university upon which they could reflect. Students beyond third-year were excluded from this study as their experiences in smaller, upper-year classes may not provide the most optimal view of the effects of massification. Participation was also limited to students between the ages of 18 and 22, and excluded international students. The choice to exclude mature and international students is based on their unique experiences in university that may shape their perceptions beyond the scope of the current study. Participation also was open to students who attend affiliates of the university who take classes on main campus. This provided contrasting experiences between those attending the smaller affiliate colleges and those attending the main campus of the university in several dimensions of interest in this study, including perceptions of classes and class sizes, and perceptions of the larger university environment and school community.

Recruitment involved displaying posters in several buildings across campus. These posters described the study, the inclusion criteria, and the contact information of the researchers. Passive snowball sampling was also used, as participants were asked to pass on the investigator's email and information if they knew someone who might be interested in participating. Snowball sampling is an important recruitment method to use when sample populations are difficult to gain access to (Noy, 2008). In this case, with no compensation for participating in the current study, snowball sampling was a valuable method to spark interest for participation.

A total of ten participants were interviewed. This small sample size was the result of low response rates despite repeated efforts at advertising the study over a period of four months. Given this limitation, the diversity of the sample was also limited, indicating that while the

narratives of participants provide valuable insight into student experiences, they are not generalized to any particular group. Qualitative researchers often use “saturation” to determine when recruitment can stop, which involves an assessment of the narratives of participants to determine whether new information or themes are emerging from additional interviews (Saunders et al., 2017). For the current study, the narratives of participants were quite similar and themes were recurrent in their experiences. While saturation was not achieved in this study, the narratives of participants do suggest that their experiences were largely similar with a few unique experiences that could be focused on in future research.

4.3 Data Collection Procedures

Recruitment began in mid to late January 2018. The first interview occurred on January 30th, 2018, and the last interview occurred on April 9th, 2018. Interested participants emailed the co-investigator and were sent the letter of information and consent form, which can be found in Appendix B. The letter of information details the aim of the study, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and provides potential respondents with all information that they would need to make an informed decision about participating in this study. After reading this document, interested participants emailed the researcher to confirm their participation. A time and date for the interview was then scheduled for each individual participant, and the participant was provided with the room number for the interview. All interviews were conducted with one participant, on-campus in a quiet, private room, and each interview lasted 45 to 90 minutes. Participants brought the signed consent form on the day of their interview, or a form was provided upon their arrival at the interview room. Prior to beginning the interview, participants were reminded that their participation was entirely voluntary, and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. All interviews were audio-recorded. Upon completion of the interview,

participants were asked to pass on information about the study, and the researchers' contact information, to anyone who might be interested in participating. Participants were not compensated for their time, as indicated in the letter of information.

4.3.1 Instruments

The interview protocol used in this study is included in Appendix A. This protocol was semi-structured to allow participants to focus on their own experiences in university. First, demographic questions were asked to ensure participants met the inclusion criteria for the study. Second, questions were asked about students' broad experiences in university, as well as more specifically asking them about their recognition of the factors associated with massification. These factors included their motivations for attending university, the size of classes and of the university, student engagement, contact with faculty and other students, and access to and awareness of on-campus mental health resources. Participants were also asked about how these factors impacted their academic achievement. In the last section of the protocol, questions focused on how students viewed these factors associated with massification as impacting them socially or emotionally to assess how students conceptualize their well-being in relation to the university environment. The protocol was quite extensive as it covered factors associated with massification, and asked participants to conceptualize these factors more personally in terms of social experiences and experiences related to their well-being.

Interviews were a valuable research method for this study because this method provided the respondents with the opportunity to detail their first-hand experiences of the university context and their well-being during university. In the current study, second and third-year university students were treated as informants who provided information about the context of university and how it impacts them and other students. Using semi-structured interviews was

optimal so that the researcher could formulate some questions of interest but also allow respondents to share avenues the researcher may not have considered. The in-depth nature of the interview protocol ensured that respondents were able to discuss their university experiences more holistically and provide specific examples from their experiences. The interview guide also provided respondents with the opportunity to give anecdotal evidence or real-life experiences pertaining to the study content to elucidate their thoughts and feelings. Further, interviews allowed respondents to share ideas about their experiences that they felt were most relevant to the research questions at hand.

The interview guide was developed with a degree of flexibility to allow the researcher to tailor the questions to participants' unique experiences. For example, many questions asked about ideas of community for participants in terms of the entire university. Participants attending an affiliate college were able to speak to this larger community and the community at their affiliate college, and whether these conceptions of community were different. Furthermore, the flexibility in the protocol allowed participants to articulate the meanings and importance that they attached to their experiences and allowed for participants to discuss avenues or topics that had not been considered or covered in the initial protocol. This is an advantage of semi-structured, in-depth interviews as a research method, because it allows participants to provide their unique points of view, and to guide the research in directions that may be valuable for future consideration.

4.4 Participant Demographics

The participants ranged in age from 19 to 21, with the average age at 20 years old. The majority of respondents were female, with only two respondents identifying as male. Most students interviewed were in the second-year of their studies, although two respondents were in

their third-year. Only two of the respondents attended an affiliate college, with the rest attending main campus. Seven participants resided in residence in first-year, with the rest living off-campus with family or roommates. At the time of the interview, most participants lived off-campus with roommates or family, while three respondents still resided in residence. Lastly, most of the participants were in a program in the Social Sciences, such as Psychology (4) or Sociology (2). One participant was in The Faculty of Information and Media Studies (FIMS), one was in Geography, one was in Health Sciences, and one was undeclared. The Faculty of Social Science is the largest Faculty at the university of interest, consisting of around 6,500 students in 2016/2017 (Western University, 2018). It is important to acknowledge that there are a number of other faculties at this university, among which the remaining 18,000 students are divided (Western University, 2018). So, while the current study does acknowledge that the participants were mainly from the largest faculty, their views are not representative of students from all faculties at this university. Further, the Faculty of Social Sciences is cited as being dominated by mostly female students (Pinkerton, 2017), indicating that the over-representation of women in the current study's sample may be explained by the over-representation of students from this faculty. The information outlined above describing the sample is also presented in Table 1 (below).

Table 1: Participant Profiles

Assigned Number	Age	Gender	School-Year	Main or Affiliate Campus	Faculty	Living Arrangements: First-year	Living Arrangements: Current
01	20	Female	Second	Main	FIMS	Residence	Off-campus
02	19	Female	Second	Main	Geography	Residence	Off-campus
03	19	Female	Second	Main	Sociology	Off-campus	Off-campus
04	20	Female	Third	Main	Sociology	Residence	Off-campus
05	21	Male	Third	Main	Psychology	Residence	Off-campus
06	21	Male	Second	Main	Undeclared	Off-campus	Off-campus
07	19	Female	Second	Main	Health Science	Residence	Residence
08	20	Female	Second	Affiliate	Psychology	Residence	Residence
09	21	Female	Second	Affiliate	Psychology	Residence	Residence
10	20	Female	Second	Main	Psychology	Off-campus	Off-campus

4.5 Human Participants and Ethics Precautions

To participate in this study, the researcher had access to respondents' full names and email addresses. All files containing these identifiers were kept on a password protected computer in an encrypted file or in a locked drawer in the researcher's office on-campus. These identifiers were not used in the analysis and interview recordings and transcripts contained no identifiable information. Rather than using pseudonyms, participants were assigned a number at the outset of their interview, starting at 01 to 10. These numbers were used for both the final write-up and differentiating between interviews. All data collected in this study remained confidential and was used only for the purposes of the current study. Direct quotes were used in the results section of this paper, but participants were referred to using the numbers detailed above and any identifiable information in these quotes was removed. The current study received ethics approval from the Research Ethics Board (Appendix C).

The questions asked in the interviews were not sensitive in nature, as the study focused more broadly on student experiences in university and overall well-being. Thus, there were no known risks to participating in this study. Contact numbers for student well-being or mental health organizations at the university of interest were provided in the Letter of Information as a precaution, (Appendix B), in the event that participants required them following the interview.

4.6 Data Analysis

Interviews were transcribed word-for-word by the researcher using the program Express Scribe (Version 7.01; NCH Software, 2001). First, key words and phrases were identified and searched for in the interview transcripts relating to two broad categories of interest in this study. Key words and phrases involving the first category, student well-being, included stress, anxiety, isolation, issues or community. The second category involved factors associated with

massification such as motivations for attending university, student or faculty disengagement, class size, student population size, and commercialization. Of interest was how students discussed key words related to student well-being in relation to their perceptions of the current context of mass higher education. Other key words that emerged from the analysis itself were the importance of learning or enjoying your studies, and personal growth while in university. Next, thematic-analysis was used to identify key themes related to these key words and phrases in the data, using analytic and descriptive codes. The transcripts were analyzed for broader initial themes relating to the potential outcomes of this study. These themes included the recognition of some aspects of massification, such as large class sizes and a large student population, motivations for attending university, disengagement, contact with faculty, as well as participants' awareness and use of mental health resources, and their overall well-being and experiences in university. To determine key themes from participant narratives, the identified key words and phrases were compiled in a Word document and were analyzed further for similarities and differences between the interview participants.

Within each of these broad themes, and through an iterative process, the researcher determined sub-themes that all or most of the participants had referenced, as well as information that was outside of the discourse of most participants. Interviews were also coded for sub-themes related to stress, anxiety, depression/depressed, and happiness/unhappiness in terms of how these key words were discussed in relation to the factors associated with massification. Given that this was an iterative process, some themes identified at the outset were later dropped if most participants did not reference the theme. For example, some of the initial participants discussed how students who receive average grades will still receive degrees, yet very few participants later in data collection mentioned this theme, so it was not included as a focus of this research.

As well, some themes emerged later in the data collection and analysis process. For example, the initial participants had little contact with mental health resources on-campus and did not have much feedback on these resources. Yet, later participants had strong feelings about these resources and this emerged as a very important theme in the data. The purpose of these themes is not to produce generalizable results, but rather to outline the experiences of the participants in this study related to the university environment and student well-being.

4.7 Reflexivity

Through the use of semi-structured interviews, the researcher or interviewer becomes a part of the narrative and dialogue (Miller & Crabtree, 2004). Through this process, the interviewer occupies a position where they may influence the dialogue that is produced by the participants. Due to this, it is important to acknowledge my role as the interviewer and my position as both an interviewer and an influencer in the current study. Further, it is important to note how my personal characteristics may influence participants' dialogue, as well as the steps taken to ensure that my influence is limited as to not skew the research.

The fact that I am of a similar age to the participants and attended university had a positive effect on data collection. This is because I had first-hand knowledge of the context of the university environment and could easily understand any anecdotal evidence or slang that the participants used. Participants were open and willing to discuss experiences and frustrations pertaining to the university system with me, indicating at times that they felt that I knew where they were coming from and that I potentially had similar experiences given my previous enrollment in an undergraduate program. In some instances, however, this was a hindrance, as I had to probe further into topics that the participant assumed I fully understood. To ensure that the similarity between myself and the respondents did not affect the coding and analysis processes of

this project, the research design and the findings were rooted in and contextualized using additional literature. As a whole, it was beneficial for the current study that I had had similar experiences to the respondents and could relate to them on a more personal level, as it allowed for more open dialogue.

Chapter 5

5 Results

This chapter focuses on the main findings of the study from an analysis of the narratives of the ten interviews. Below, the findings are organized into three broad themes that were identified from participants' discussions of the university environment. These themes were 1) perceptions that the university or professors are responsible for certain aspects of university life that the participants found to cause them stress, 2) feelings of isolation and the availability of social support or social networks for students, and 3) students' conceptions of stress and anxiety in different aspects of university life. These themes all include discussions of participants' recognition of the factors associated with massification and how they feel these factors impact student well-being.

5.1 The University's Responsibility

A narrative that emerged from participants' experiences in several different aspects of university life was that they felt the university had a duty to their students to optimize learning and social experiences. Participants conceptualized their place in the university in some cases as a passive observer, as they hold an expectation that the university will take care of certain aspects of schooling and facilitate a positive environment. At the macro level, this belief of university responsibility was linked by participants to the commercialization of higher education. Research has outlined the shift in the modern university from an institution of liberal education to one that focuses on the vocational training of students and the selling of a product, namely a degree (Côté & Allahar, 2012). Many participants (7) in this study acknowledged the commercialization of their university in terms of viewing the university as a degree granting institution from which students are purchasing a product.

In contrast, for one participant, the business model of higher education suggested to them that students were not being provided with the school experience that they should be:

As I go through it, over the years, I'm starting to lose faith in our school, and that shouldn't be a feeling you should have. I love the people here, but the school as an institution, I think they're letting us down. They're treating it more as a business now and there's so much going on and there's so much wrong about our school. And for some reason, we're not doing anything to fix it. It's just really unsettling. I think [the business model] is just everywhere. Like everyone's just paying the big fees to pay for school. And then when you come out you're not even guaranteed a job cause there's so many people going to university.
- Participant 05

A second participant indicated that, due to commercialization, student voices are less likely to be heard as their voices are not considered as important as that of other stakeholders in higher education. This participant felt that student views are important to consider, as the university requires students to maintain operation:

Just, just listen to us. Like we're the ones who keep this place going because if there were no students, there wouldn't be a school. I mean I know yeah if there wasn't administration, there wouldn't be a school either. But I'm like, the whole business is, and I know university is a business... If there wasn't students to attend university, there wouldn't be funding, there wouldn't be programs running, it wouldn't be what it is. So, we're just as important as the administration... I would appreciate it if my voice was valued a little more.
- Participant 08

Participant 08's comments also reflect a view that students, as customers, keep the business of higher education in motion, and as such their points of view should be highly valued.

Participants also discussed how the commercialization of their university affects class size. All of the main campus students in the sample (8) cited average first-year class sizes between 400 and 800 students. This is not uncommon, as research indicates average class sizes of around 600 in North American universities (Allais, 2014). The two participants attending the affiliate college had much different experiences, citing average class sizes on the affiliate campus anywhere between 50 and 60 students. Both affiliate student participants took courses at main

campus but indicated that their main campus classes were also smaller, around 150 students. These two students did note that the size of their main campus, first-year classes were probably outside of the norm for the typical student at this university. They acknowledged that most first-year, introductory classes on main campus reach around the 600-student mark. It is interesting that they made this distinction to address why their experiences in classes may have been more positive, or different, than other students and other participants in this study.

Participants cited discouragement associated with feeling like just another face in the crowd in larger classes. Participant 06 described this type of discouragement as feeling like he was being “pumped out of an assembly line.” Further, participants (4) felt that they were viewed as a number by professors, particularly in large classes where they had no relationship with professors. These participants felt that large class sizes put more onus and responsibility on students to reach out for extra help, as this help was available but professors had so many students to meet with, so students had to make the extra effort. However, some participants contended that with classes of hundreds of students, it was unlikely that professors would forge personal relationships with many students. These heightened student-to-teacher ratios and students’ inability or unwillingness to meet with professors were experiences that participants linked to the commercialization of higher education. Respondents also felt that their experiences could be improved by reducing the number of students in a class, rather than students improving their willingness to meet with professors or putting more effort in. In a later section, class size will be discussed in relation to students’ perceptions of their well-being.

Participants also discussed how laptop use could influence their ability to pay attention in classes. They felt that the larger the class, the less likely the professor would be able to monitor all students in the class, so they felt they could get away with misusing their laptop. Half of the

participants also noted that the laptops of other students negatively impacted their ability to pay attention in classes. Participants posited that, especially in classes that were large, it was easy to see what other students were doing on their laptop, whether it was social media or online shopping. They noted that once they saw others on their laptops, they were either distracted by watching what their peers were doing, or it made them feel like it was okay to engage in these behaviours as well. Again, participants tasked the university with the responsibility to reduce class sizes to allow professors more control over a classroom and to reduce distractions. Yet, when professors took measures to reduce distractions by removing laptops, some participants felt this unduly increased their stress levels or their grades:

But like, during the time, during lecture it's kind of stressful like oh, I don't know if I can keep up. Which is kinda good cause like you have to slow down and it kinda helps you remember a little bit better.

- Participant 05

I was allowed to have my laptop in all my classes except my English class. And that was one where I was kind of scratching my head cause I thought it would be really useful in that class cause there was lots of writing. So, I think that negatively impacted by English grade.

- Participant 09

This presents a very complex narrative, as participants seemed to desire a reduction in the possibility of distractions through reduced class sizes but were reluctant to accept professors' attempts at reducing distractions through the removal of laptops.

5.1.1 Orientation Week

Further, participants felt that the university had a duty to prioritize social events, such as orientation week and extracurricular activities such as clubs, groups, and sports, to facilitate social interactions between students. For example, orientation week at the university of interest and the affiliate colleges is a time for new students to meet other incoming students and participate in events and activities to establish social connections to the broader community and

the institution. In the initial interview protocol, orientation week was an avenue that had not been considered by the researcher to build a sense of community in university. However, several respondents (6) relayed positive or negative experiences during their orientation weeks on their own when asked about community and the size of the institution they were attending. Although most participants felt that their university did a good job of promoting these events, there were mixed views on whether the experiences were positive or negative. Those who felt this week was positive (4) noted that it provided students with an avenue to make meaningful connections with other students that they may not have contact with otherwise. These participants reported positive experiences with meeting their Sophs (Sophomores), who are upper year students who run the orientation weeks at both the affiliates and on main campus. Participant 10 reported that she still had contact with her Soph who she met in first-year. Similarly, Participant 02 noted that a student's experience during this week depended on the effort that they put forth to forge connections and make friendships with other students. This is an acknowledgement of some student responsibility in forging connections with students during school events, such as orientation week.

However, off-campus students described more negative experiences (2) during orientation week, and felt that the organization was not conducive to a positive experience for them. For example, off-campus students suggested that the event days were too long, with long breaks between events. They felt that while students living in residence could go back to their rooms between events, off-campus students had to decide whether they would stay between events or head home and/or likely not return for later events. Participant 06 noted that due to his engagement in part-time work, he did not feel he had the time to come to campus for orientation week events. Participant 03 noted that, since she was not fully participating in orientation week

events, she felt that the students living in residence looked down on her or looked at her differently, which made making connections more difficult. Feelings of disconnect were exacerbated by separation during orientation week by residence or off-campus status, further segregating off-campus students. This is an area that off-campus students felt could be better organized by the university to ensure that students make social connections in their first-year.

5.1.2 Mental Health Resources

Another observation made by participants regarding their perceptions of university responsibility involved access to on-campus mental health resources. Many participants noted that on-campus resources are good to have in the current social climate, with mental health becoming an increasing focus in higher education. They also noted that these resources are important due to the great amount of stress associated with university. Additionally, participants felt that students who move away from home for school may not have strong social support networks while in university. However, participants also questioned how many students use these on-campus resources, as many of the participants did not use these resources themselves and did not have friends who did so. Some participants (2) indicated that there may be a stigma associated with admitting you need help or that you are struggling with your mental health. They felt that this stigma may deter some students from accessing resources, acknowledging the potentially limited role that universities play in students' use of available resources.

Some participants (2) felt that their university was not doing enough to bring awareness to issues of poor well-being or poor mental health, but also expressed that awareness was an empty action that only occurred after an event and was likely not helping students:

It doesn't sit right with me, because I know that [this university] doesn't intentionally mean to do this, but there are a lot of issues. And a lot of students this year have committed suicide and more than we've seen before. And as much as we send out our prayers and thoughts and we put the flags down... We don't really do anything about it.

We only do something about it after the fact. And I think the resources that are available, a lot of people don't know about it, and once they do know about it, they don't feel comfortable. Because they're talking to a stranger.

- Participant 04

And the biggest problem I have is like, we're all about mental health after an incident... after that it's wiped clean and we don't talk about it ever again. And then it's all thoughts and prayers to the families and friends, but then after that it's wiped clean and we don't talk about it ever again. And we kinda just leave it in the past. Like the [suicide] we had recently, I didn't hear about it. And even after I didn't see anymore, like no emails, no new posters or anything that kind of raised the awareness. Like there's already been one too many, I think they should take more action to it. And more responsibility.

- Participant 05

This final quote indicates that Participant 05 felt that addressing issues of mental health and raising awareness and solutions to this problem are the university's responsibility. Participants (3) did acknowledge the potential for funding or budgeting constraints that limit the utility of mental health resources or awareness campaigns. They went further to articulate that universities should restructure their budget and prioritize mental health given their perceptions that the number of students suffering from issues of mental health or poor well-being is on the rise.

The belief that the university was somewhat responsible for student mental health also extended to participants' perceptions of the available resources on-campus, how the resources are advertised, and their sufficiency. Many respondents were aware of several mental health resources, both on-campus, off-campus, or online. All participants acknowledged the two major on-campus resources, a mental health clinic and a psychological services clinic. Some (4) also discussed several online resources that are available such as Student Help Line, Good2talk, and the LGBT helpline. Participants noted hearing about resources through social media (4), posters around campus (4), email (3), professors advertising them in classes (3), and friends (2). Two of the participants noted that they went looking for resources either for themselves or for friends, and looked online or called on-campus resources. Despite the variety of avenues through which

participants heard about mental health resources, some (4) had concerns that awareness was not reaching all students and that the university could do more to advertise the services and connect students with them. While some participants (2) did place blame on the university for poor advertising of mental health services, most recognized that accessing these resources was largely dependent on a student's efforts, acknowledging some student responsibility for the management of well-being or mental health.

Although very few participants (3) had used on-campus resources and only three had friends who had used resources, most held some negative perceptions, through friends' experiences or their own assumptions, about the adequacy of resources that they felt needed to be corrected. The most important concern that participants had regarding on-campus resources involved the length of time students had to wait to get an appointment or to speak to someone. Three participants noted that the average wait time they were aware of for some on-campus resources was 6 to 8 weeks. They thought that this needed to be changed, as many of the issues addressed at a mental health clinic are time sensitive and lengthy wait times put students at risk. These participants also acknowledged that long wait times may be due to structural constraints in terms of budgeting or resources that are allocated to mental health that needs to be addressed. Due to this concern, some participants were uneasy with the current state of the resources on their campus:

And it's just (sigh), there's so many people that are going through such challenging times. And the fact that [other students are] not able to access the services because of the restrictions that there are, it's deeply frustrating that we lose students because our services are ineffective and our services are not extensive enough.

- Participant 08

Participants who had used on-campus resources also noted that they felt some resources had hours that were insufficient for student schedules (1), that older counsellors were less likely to be

helpful (1), that some of the resource centres were disorganized (1), and that the struggles that were coming up were not being well taken care of by current resources (2). Two participants also noted that on-campus resources are often a gateway resource to off-campus resources, and the latter, in their view, are more effective and helpful. It is important to note that the feedback participants had regarding these services were formulated based on their perceptions of resources they did not use or the experiences that their peers shared with them. This lack of first-hand knowledge or contact with mental health resources on a university campus presents an important avenue for future research to consider.

Only two participants experienced poor mental health or a negative traumatic experience while in university, and through these struggles they found that the resources on their university campus were insufficient and impersonal. Participant 08 and her friends experienced a near student tragedy of one of their friends, and were promised access to psychological services on-campus. This participant noted that while she did not try to access these services, some of her friends did and they did not receive appointments. Participant 09, who used psychological services on-campus quite frequently, identified as having bipolar disorder and an eating disorder. She noted that the nurses in the clinic were not trained in Psychology, so she felt that they were not equipped with the skills to interact with her in a more positive manner. She noted that one nurse did not want to weigh her, despite it being required on her chart due to her eating disorder, because the nurse thought she “looked fine.” She felt that due to these insensitive interactions, Psychology nurses should be available for appointments that involved student mental health.

Interestingly, one reason the participants did not need to use on-campus resources was a preference for managing their own mental health or well-being through self-regulation. Self-regulation included the use of regular exercise (4) or retail therapy (3), contacting a family doctor

(3), or contacting off-campus therapists (2) to manage well-being. From these narratives, it seems that some students do take responsibility for their own well-being and take steps to manage it on their own. It is not clear if this is a contradiction to their statements indicating university responsibility for student mental health, or due to a perception that institutional resources are not adequate or accessible. For example, two participants cited a Facebook page where students anonymously submit messages. These two participants saw messages about negative experiences using on-campus resources, such as students using the resources and coming out feeling much worse about their mental health in the end. They noted that the feedback and comments from other students was positive and was a helpful resource for students to use. They also felt that the university could employ a similar model as the informal Facebook page to help supplement the on-campus resources they perceived as inadequate.

5.1.3 Engagement: The Responsibility of Professors

Participants felt that professors had a responsibility to engage and entertain students in class to maintain their attention, while students had limited responsibility for their academic engagement. Participants extended this responsibility to their enjoyment of the course material as well, as they felt that students' enjoyment of classes was largely dependent on professors' teaching styles, passion, and efforts to engage students. Participants judged professors' engagement by their available or extended office hours, and willingness to help students succeed through the provision of study tips and a general demeanor that the participants perceived as caring for their students and student success. Further, students judged professors' engagement and commitment by their passion in lectures and their teaching style.

The majority of the participants indicated that the main format in most of their classes was a PowerPoint presentation, uploaded online prior to the class, and the professor at the front

lecturing to a room full of students. Most of these participants (6) indicated a preference for the PowerPoint method, because it kept their notes more organized, provided more structure to the content, and they felt it kept them more engaged. Participants particularly enjoyed lectures where professors elaborated on the PowerPoint slides and explained their thinking, as well as those lectures where professors involved students by asking questions. Eight participants indicated that the lecture-style of teaching seemed to be the only plausible and appropriate avenue for addressing large classes and getting the information across to students. However, participants (3) also noted that this lecture-style may not be the most effective approach to enhance student learning or promote student engagement, with some indicating that class or group discussions would be a better route if classes were reduced in size. Only a few participants (3) had experienced smaller classes that involved more discussion-based learning. In this light, participants noted that in large classes, group discussions were not feasible, so they preferred smaller classes.

A point of frustration for some of the participants (4) was when professors used what some termed “PowerPoint karaoke” as a teaching method, which they defined as professors simply reading off a slideshow and not providing any elaboration. Participants found this teaching style to be dry, disengaging, and that it created an atmosphere where students did not need to attend class to get the information or to do well in the course:

Well some just read off the PowerPoint like “PowerPoint karaoke” literally kills me, I hate it. Cause it’s like what am I paying 8 grand here for you to read slides that I can access on OWL... Then others it’s like you actually have to listen cause it’s like they put points and then you... would actually have to listen. So, like [professors] who do PowerPoint karaoke like I’m out of it. I could be on my phone then look at my slide shows like later and... you don’t even have to go to class.

- Participant 01

You could walk into a class and not feel like you wanna be there because the [professor] is like boring or just reads off the slide... and people are like, what's the point in me coming here. Like you didn't really learn anything.

- Participant 02

Two of the participants felt that professors and professors' teaching styles set the tone for the learning environment:

But when you walk in a classroom and you know the [professor] is gonna give you a learning experience every time you walk in, it's gonna give you more motivation to go to class... I think [name of a first-year professor] needs to take more of an initiative to explain why he chose the [supplementary course material] and why it blends with the content for that week... It's kind of like a math question that you didn't review in class.

- Participant 02

But if [the professor is] not gonna like present like an actually good lecture then like, yeah, it makes you like not like the class because of that.

- Participant 03

Participant 02 also noted that when professors choose not to use PowerPoint, it puts more pressure on students to keep up with the work, the pace of the lecture, and to pay attention. The above quotes and ideas from participants reflect a narrative that professors are responsible for student engagement, and that if professors are not engaging their students in classes, students will do poorly in the course.

Further, students felt that it was professors' responsibility to provide consistency in grading. Despite this feeling, there were instances that participants recounted where they saw little connection between their efforts and their grades, either for better or worse:

Cause I know like one essay I wrote last year like two days before and like [I] ended with an 85. And I spent like a week and a half writing the other one and got like a 70. So, I think... it's like how you like the topic.

- Participant 02

For some quizzes that we did in tutorial, I would do the reading really last-minute and I would do really well. But then some quizzes that I would do the readings way before, thinking that I understood it, the quiz would have gone really badly. So, it varies with just my understanding.

- Participant 04

Like, I think you look back on some exams you write... Like I just put so much time and effort into this and this is all I got to show for it. Cause like the [professors] don't know how much work you put in, they only know what you remember in that instance.

- Participant 05

I did a [Psychology assignment]. It was given to us months in advance, but I did it 2 days before and I got a pretty good mark! I wouldn't say I tried very hard either... So, exams [reflect my effort], assignments [do not].

- Participant 06

Sometimes you're really, really pleasantly surprised when you get a mark back that you thought you were gonna do poorly on because you didn't spend an abundance of time on it... I find it can also be used as an excuse for if you get a poor grade. And you say well that's not that bad because I only had this many hours to study.

- Participant 07

Some respondents (4) expanded to discuss the current practice of grade curving in university and how the bell curve has affected them. These participants felt that bell curving marks to fit a faculty or university standard was wrong when it brought the grades of students down or below the mark they felt they earned. Further, they felt that curving marks down was unreasonable as it led to more unfounded stress for students in terms of their identity as a student and their progress in university. In the case that marks were curved up, these three participants did not have an issue with this practice, indicating that an upward curve can account for things like an ineffective professor or poor teaching styles. These narratives indicate that participants felt it was their university's duty to adjust marks due to unfair circumstances with classes or professors, but that it was immoral for the university to set departmental standards and adjust students' grades down.

The participants' conceptions of professors' responsibility for student engagement may stem from their experiences in high school. For example, participants extended responsibility for their disengagement behaviours to their high school environment, where they felt they were "spoon fed" information and lacked independence. Half of the participants felt that having

teachers in high school who guided the learning process and held students more accountable helped them to engage:

It's just like a different kind of work ethic, like it's just a different type of learning cause in high school you didn't have to do like readings, you had more like homework that you actually had to complete and like they would check... Where like university it's like no one's gonna be responsible for you, like you've gotta do your own thing, you have to take your own initiative.

- Participant 01

I think high school was more like guiding you. And now it's more like you making your own decisions. So, like, you kind of like figure yourself out more here than in high school... Here it's like all your choice, like you don't have to be here.

- Participant 02

Before [in high school] like your teacher kind of like watched you and if you were getting 50s or whatever they'd like pull you aside, be like hey, what's up, like your marks aren't looking too good. I felt more of a connection. Where like university if you got a 50 like they don't care.

Participant 03

High school was like, we were basically spoon fed. I think it's the structure... I think the biggest difference is having tests more frequently than like the [university] exams.

- Participant 05

And it's like they really don't give you the time, or like the... they don't really spoon feed you, right [in university]? So, now I have to do the readings on my own, it's more condensed.

- Participant 06

These narratives involved the idea that once students reached university, they were now responsible for their learning and the completion of the academic work. Yet, one participant went so far as to say that their teachers in high school did not prepare them for university, as this participant felt the academic work was too easy in high school and teachers did not allow students to exercise their independence. This narrative provides insight into why participants feel university professors are responsible for maintaining student engagement.

5.1.4 Personal Growth

All of the above perceptions demonstrate participants' views that the university or

professors are responsible for some aspects of university. In this view, participants felt that in a commercialized higher education system, the university has a duty to provide students with a positive learning and social environment. However, participants also acknowledged that shifts toward commercialization in higher education may result in very little personal growth for students, indicating that some students exit university as the same person as when they entered. This was problematic in the participants' views because a few participants stressed the importance of personal growth and the development of independence and autonomy for student development. Student personal growth, according to the participants, also involved the development of effective coping strategies, something participants felt was possible only through facing stressful situations in university and addressing them on their own. Participant 04 suggested that allowing students to make decisions on their own and "letting the leashes go every now and then" allows students to develop better skills, independence, and decision making or problem solving skills. As well, Participant 07 indicated that the freedom students are afforded in university allows them to do the academic work on their own time and at their own pace.

Participants (7) noted that although they perceived a business or commercial structure at their university, they felt that they had experienced a great deal of personal growth. Many of the participants expressed gratitude for their education (10), personal connections they developed with students or faculty (8), social skills that they have developed so far in university (6), and a sense of accomplishment or status that they achieved by attending university (2). Some also felt that when they exit the university institution, they will have a better understanding of the world and will have developed positive coping skills for stressful situations. Some participants (5) also felt that their personal growth came from their department or topic of study, indicating that their program broadened their minds and brought attention to social problems. Given most of the

respondents were in a program in the Social Science faculty, the results may be due to potentially unique experiences of students in this department. These ideas present a very contradictory narrative for students who blame their high school teachers or university faculty members for student disengagement, yet they value the development of independence and autonomy in university. Further, the development of personal growth was discussed by participants as a personal accomplishment that students achieve on their own, yet participants held the university responsible for reducing the challenges they faced.

5.2 Feelings of Isolation, Social Support, and Social Networks

A second major theme that emerged from participant narratives relates to students' place in the university system in relation to their social interactions with other students or professors and faculty. Participants expressed that their perceived position in these social interactions affected their well-being in terms of feelings of isolation, social support systems, and social network development.

Participants conceptualized feelings of isolation in two ways. They felt isolated in larger classes that made them feel less social and more alone, and they felt isolated in such a large institution, where they felt like a face in the crowd. One participant noted that he felt like an outsider as he saw other students socializing and sitting with friends in classes, and he felt like he was unable to connect with other students when there were so many others in the room. Others noted a feeling of intimidation to talk to other students before class, after class, or during class breaks, and that they were more likely to sit silently in a larger class and leave once it was done. Participants' isolation also involved conceptions of an inability to participate in the classroom when they had a limited number of social ties or friends in the class. Additionally, participants discussed how the use of laptops fed into feelings of alienation in classes. Although most

respondents (7) used their laptops in most of their classes, they also felt that laptop use further alienated students from each other, as they were more focused on taking notes quickly or surfing the net. Participants also found laptops to alienate students from their professors, creating a barrier between faculty and students that promoted less class participation.

Some of the most satisfying aspects of university discussed by the participants involved the social facets of university life. The social facets of university, according to the participants, involved creating positive and enduring friendships with other students, which made their university experience more enjoyable. One participant noted that social life is a big part of university, and that students who neglect the social aspects of university life run the risk of becoming isolated, depressed, or sad, which can ultimately affect academic performance. According to the participants, the development of social ties in university is important for academic help, emotional support, and for enjoying university. Some participants (6) chose the university of interest because they already had strong social support systems with friends or family who were enrolled at this university or were going to be. About half of the participants noted some difficulty with making new friends in university, as they felt like they were thrown into a new social environment where the onus was on them to forge positive and meaningful connections or risk getting lost among the crowd.

For some participants (5), part of the development of the university community involved taking part in extracurricular activities and getting involved on campus, which they felt could lead to reductions in feelings of isolation and increases in social interactions. These participants noted that the academic part of university should not restrict students from getting involved on campus. They argued that if students are too focused on their academics, they will become more stressed out and may not have an avenue to relieve that stress, such as through extracurricular

activities. Participant 03 found that her involvement on a dance team at the university increased her social circle and helped her make more friends, which was helpful given she was also living off-campus during university. Participant 08 discussed how her lack of involvement in extracurricular activities in the first semester of her first-year in university led to feelings of isolation. Once this participant became more involved in the university, she felt her experiences were more positive and through her involvement she was able to help incoming students improve their own experiences as well.

Participants were also asked more specifically about how the large size of the campus and large student population positively or negatively impacted their ideas about community. As Trow (1974) notes, the move through the massification of higher education involves an increase in the number of students on university campuses and in the diversity of students. Participants (4) felt large student populations were positive because students had access to more diverse viewpoints, cultures, and backgrounds:

Positive, [because] you can meet more people. And there's like more interests, more things to choose from cause there's a lot more people and like diversity in this school.
- Participant 02

I think it's really positive because it really opens your mind to what the world is like. I think it makes you less narrow minded... I think it's good to have people from different cultures and different personalities, backgrounds, social groups, everything like that. I think it's really beneficial to open your mind, open your connections, and kind of prepare you for life outside of university.
- Participant 10

Participants (3) also felt that due to the size of their university, there were more resources available for the development of clubs and groups that help students meet and socialize with other students. Further, participants felt that large student populations gave students a better chance of being able to find other students they could connect with, or extracurricular activities that they could partake in.

In contrast to positive views on a large student population, some participants felt that the size of their university was entirely responsible for the difficulty in creating a community and exacerbating isolation. Participant 08 noted that it may be easier to get lost in the crowd, caught up in the competitive nature of university, and more difficult to be socially successful when the campus is large. There was also a perception of competition in university for Participant 04 that further alienated students from each other, as she felt everyone was competing for a spot in her program. This participant noted that high schools have contributed to a perception of competition in university, and that this may inhibit one's ability or willingness to connect with other students. She also noted that it had not been her experience that competition between students was a prevalent part of university, and that in most cases she had found other students to be uplifting and helpful, both socially and academically. Participants (6) also noted that it was easier to forge more close-knit communities on a smaller scale, such as communities within their residence or their faculty. The two participants enrolled at the affiliate college, and one participant discussing another affiliate college, indicated that on these smaller campuses, the sense of community is much easier to foster due to the size of the campus. While the affiliate college students felt that there was an overall university community, they felt more attached to their home campus, similar to how other respondents felt more attached to their faculties or residences.

Those participants who lived on-campus in first-year (7) suggested that making friends became easier as time passed, mostly because they felt they were immersed in an environment where they were surrounded by other students. This indicates a period of adjustment following the transition to university. Experiences were vastly different for those students living off-campus (3). For example, Participant 03, who lived off-campus in first year, felt that she struggled to make friends and connections in first-year, as she felt like she was an outsider in

comparison to students living in residence. One participant also noted a feeling of disorientation if she or other students were unable to forge connections with other students:

Sometimes you get lost in the crowd. Cause like, this school's so big. So, like we don't have a set friend group like [in high school]. You [are] kind of like always searching I guess for something. You're searching for a friend, a class, like you're just like really disoriented.

- Participant 02

Participants discussed how feelings of isolation or alienation in university could be managed by the development of positive social ties or social support networks. These support networks included good relationships with parents, with whom students felt they could discuss their mental health struggles, or a good group of friends that students could either talk to about their struggles or spend time with when they were feeling down. Two participants indicated that their residence manager was a good resource when they were struggling with their mental health. A third participant used an academic resource intended for time management and study tips, and turned it into a mental health resource, calling her academic counsellor her “therapist” (Participant 04). Nine participants indicated that they did not need to use on-campus resources for well-being management, as they had access to other resources such as good social support networks. However, some participants (2) noted they would rather use on-campus or online resources because they did not want to impose on family or friends with their struggles as they felt these social actors were “not trained” (Participant 06) to counsel them.

Participants indicated an added pressure for themselves or other students who were not as social when entering university. The participants felt these students would experience a more difficult time in university because it would be more difficult for them to make friends, leading to less involvement in the social aspects of university and less aid for the academic and/or emotional aspects of university. Participant 04 noted experiencing a more difficult time in first-

year while living in residence, as she felt she was unable to forge meaningful connections with other students, leading to feelings of loneliness and alienation. For some participants, the onus was on students to not only forge meaningful connections in a large institution, but also the maintain them during and after university. There was some evidence that participants recognized that these social connections may be temporary. This was due to a fear that once friends or the participant transitioned out of the university, their social ties would dissolve and social support would be lost. For example, Participant 04, a third-year student who had switched her program recently, felt that since most of her friends would be transitioning out of the institution before her, she may lose close friendships that she had developed. Participant 05, another third-year student, also felt that some of his relationships would dissolve once university ended, even though he would be transitioning out of university at the same time as his close friends.

Most participants (7) did not see their professors as avenues for emotional support for a variety of reasons. They felt it was not a professor's job to emotionally support students, that they would be burdening professors with their problems, or that they did not develop close enough connections to emotionally connect with professors. Three of the participants indicated that they have approached their professors with more personal matters in the past, or that they would in the future if they needed to, but mostly for academic accommodations that might be needed. Some participants indicated that even if they were not looking for emotional support, they found that some professors offered this support:

I don't look at a lot of my professors for emotional support. I don't want to look at [professor's name] as emotional support. But, you know like, there are times that I told him that I was behind on readings and he asked me why. And I told him I thought [that] I had a learning disability, so I went to a psychiatrist and he told me that I did [have a learning disability]. [So, I used the] medication that I was given to do the readings, see if it changes. [Professor's name] asked me what the medication was, he told me to watch my sleeping and watch my eating habits. I didn't think that I would be having that

conversation [with him]. So, I don't intentionally look for emotional support from my professors. I think it just happens over time.

- Participant 04

I feel initially that professors aren't really responsible for emotional support. I feel like at the most usually they're more mentors. But I feel like if you build a good relationship with them, then they can be someone who you can go to if you're in a crisis situation... They know the school, they know the resources a bit better so they can steer you in a good direction.

- Participant 08

With that religion [professor] that I was telling you about. She's like, she's so understanding that sometimes it's weird. Cause you don't expect your teacher to be really cool, and cause I told her that I was struggling and then in class a week later she was like how's it going? Are things settling down?

- Participant 09

Both affiliate college students had very different experiences of emotional support on their home campus. These students both noted that their affiliate campus was emotionally nurturing, because they felt the small size allowed for professors, students, and other faculty members to get to know each other more personally. They felt that their small campus size fostered an environment where everyone cared about how the students were doing academically and emotionally.

Outside of direct personal or emotional support, some of the participants did note that professors were generally supportive, in terms of acknowledging the position of students and understanding their point of view. These participants (7), including the two affiliate college students, noted that most professors understood the struggles of students, as at one point professors were in the same position as students. This support came in the form of study tips, empathy, and understanding, but also providing students with the freedom to develop on their own. While most of the participants expressed this positive outlook on professors, some also noted that this was not the case for all professors. Some professors, in their view (4), were not empathetic with students. According to the participants, these professors might feel that students have it easier than they did when they were students, and some professors are simply in their job

to make money, rather than teach and engage with students. For three of the participants, this difference was correlated with age, as they felt that the older the professor, the less likely they were to be empathetic with students.

Social networking was also a positive process that some participants experienced that helped them academically and emotionally. While participants in this study found it easier to social network with their peers, they had a hard time creating positive social networks with their professors. All respondents suggested that meeting with professors was an important part of university. There were several reasons that participants believed contact with faculty was important. Participants felt that meeting with professors impacted them positively through a better understanding of course material and more effective study habits (5), participation in classes where they felt more comfortable with the professor (3), and providing them with the ability to ask for extra help, such as extensions (2). Further, they felt that positive relationships with professors could steer students toward a certain topic of study or a change in their focus of study (6), and help them to develop social networks that may be helpful for them in their later studies or for employment (5).

Despite participants' indication that the development of social networks with professors was important, only Participant 06 acknowledged that she met with her professors on a weekly basis. Although five other participants did indicate meeting with a professor at least once in their first, second, or third year, eight participants said that they did not meet with their professors regularly. Many of the participants (5) felt they should be meeting with professors more to succeed in university, both academically and personally. The most common rationalizations for not meeting with professors were that participants were too intimidated or scared to meet with professors (5), they did not have specific questions or they were not struggling with the content

(4), they were too busy with work or social life to make time to see their professors (2), and/or their questions were easier to answer in class or by email (2). Participants also believed that most students did not take time to meet with their professors, with only one participant indicating that her contact with faculty vastly exceeded that of her peers. While most participants (8) indicated that meeting with professors more would do them well in terms of their academics, some (2) also noted that meeting with professors more often would add another task to their plate, and they already felt overwhelmed by the level of work in university. Participants' lack of contact with professors was interesting given their feelings that meeting with professors and creating social networks or positive relationships with them was helpful for studying, receiving extensions, receiving reference letters, and connections for future employment.

5.3 Stress and Anxiety

Participants expressed that the experience of stress and anxiety was a common occurrence for themselves and their peers. It is not surprising that the participants had a strong narrative discussing stress and anxiety, as they are experiencing a more stressful time in their lives in university at the average age, 18 to 24, when the development of poor mental health is likely (Knowlden et al., 2016; Kruisselbrink Flatt, 2013; Laidlaw et al., 2016; Nunes et al., 2014). Participants, when discussing how the factors associated with massification impact their well-being, had two very distinct narratives. The first was that the stress and anxiety involved in university was just a part of the process; a normal part of university life. In this view, participants conceptualized "normal stress" as due to exams, lack of social connections in a new environment, and students feeling out of place in a new environment. Participants here (7) noted that most students were generally in the same boat in terms of stress levels and struggles, and

that acknowledging this sameness and recognizing the normal aspects of these struggles is important for student well-being:

[There are some students] that are just so focused on one thing. They need to like not be a horse with blinds on. Like hey, look around you, everyone is in the same boat. Everyone is gonna have a hard time, everyone's gonna doubt if they're in the right thing... I find students like to have this individualistic mindset of it's me against the world. But they don't look around themselves to see that everyone is in that fight with them.
- Participant 04

In some cases, participants (7) indicated that the stress associated with university should be considered an opportunity for personal growth and development, and that the stress they faced in university allowed for the development of positive coping strategies:

I feel like sometimes you're faced with a situation, like failing grades and things like that. And it kind of like negatively affects your mental health. But you also build from that. So, it's like you kind of get knocked down a bit first-year, but like you learn from those experiences and it helps you grow as a person... You're gonna hit those bumps but it's like how you respond to it [that matters].
- Participant 02

I do think that the university puts you in a position that you have to step outside of your comfort zone. And create that [social] circle much bigger. And you know, you will feel vulnerable, and you will feel scared, and you want to run back very quickly to that safe circle, but you have to be able to grow a pair, and... be more adult.
- Participant 04

I'm going to leave [university] with a significant ability to handle stress. But there, obviously there were some falls along the way. You hated that class or you hated the [professor] or you were so stressed about an exam, or you don't know what you wanna do with the rest of your life... There's a lot of unknowns. Fortunately, that's just part of the process.
- Participant 07

I think that some people are going to find it very overwhelming and then some people are going to find inspiration through that. It's kind of like a make or break situation, where you... figure out what you want to do when you come into university. Whether you want to stay in or whether it's not right for you.
- Participant 10

This final quote also demonstrates an acknowledgment that university may not be the path for everyone, and that this “weeding out” of those who feel they do not fit in university is a positive

process for students to find their place. Furthermore, one participant noted that while university may be more stressful than high school, most students they speak with note that university is much more enjoyable in terms of independence, freedom, and the topics studied. Another participant indicated that feelings about an unrealistic workload stem from the transition to university from high school, and that students get used to an increased workload after first-year.

It appeared that despite the unknowns and stress associated with university, some participants felt that stress and uncertainty was simply a part of the process and something that could help them develop positive coping strategies, either on their own or with the help of social support networks or other resources. Furthermore, some participants indicated that their disengagement or putting work off was their own choice and probably not the most optimal for succeeding in university, seemingly taking responsibility for their actions, at least in part, for the stress and anxiety they have felt in university.

The second narrative involved discussions of the stress and anxiety associated with university life as abnormal, or something that students felt should not be happening to them. Participants (6) indicated that the most common source of undue strain and stress was exams, assignments, bad grades, certain courses and their workloads, and certain professors. Here, one participant indicated that parts of university life, such as having exams too close together or peers pulling “all-nighters” to complete projects, contributed to unneeded and unwanted stress for students. Participant 05 noted that the university is so large and the exam period is so long that having exams so close together is unreasonable and could be better organized so students experienced less stress during exam season. This participant placed responsibility on the university for an unorganized exam season, indicating that it was the university’s responsibility to make exam season easier on students. In addition to feeling that exams were too close

together, participants (3) felt that too many questions on a multiple-choice exam and test anxiety produced stress during the exam period. Participants felt that exams were an explicit measure of how students performed under pressure, rather than their skills and knowledge, which also added undue stress. A few participants discussed the stress that develops during an exam or exam season to support their claims that exams were not conducive to optimal learning or performance:

I find that for exams, everyone stresses out like a ton. And it's very, very dependent on that person's ability to handle stress explicitly. So, [someone] can have all the information... they might be the most knowledgeable person on that topic and they just cannot perform on pen and paper in an environment that's an exam writing.
- Participant 07

I find that some people get very stressed out around midterm season and finals and that sort of a thing. Because almost every course [has weekly assignments and 4 exams], so it kind of piles up... I feel like it would be easy to get behind and then it would get more stressful.
- Participant 08

In their view, since procrastination and disengagement are a part of the process of higher education, the onus is on the university to re-structure certain aspects, like exam season, to reduce pressure and stress for students. Other participants (5) also indicated that getting bad grades negatively impacted their well-being or increased their stress levels. In some cases, participants felt that bad grades were a result of strict departmental standards for grading that hinder students from receiving high grades, especially in first-year.

Several other participants (4) linked this theme of abnormal stress to the pressure associated with university, financial strains, competition between students, and feelings of alienation or disconnection between themselves and other students. Interestingly, most of their concerns here could be remedied by what other participants discussed as making an effort to get involved on campus, developing responsibility, and developing positive relationships with

faculty and other students. Participant 07 went so far as to say that the pressure associated with university can cause a conflict of identity in students who do not attain the grades that they think they should. What the participants here are arguing is that some of the stress and pressure that is associated with university places undue harm on students and the development of their identities, and that this stress could be addressed by the university.

A few participants did discuss experiences, either their own or their peers', that involved negative mental health or well-being that they felt were not a normal part of university life. Participant 04 noted that her time in residence included feelings of isolation and loneliness, compounded by feelings that she was not doing as well academically as she thought she should be, or as her peers were. She categorized these feelings of being "stuck" for both herself in first-year and people she knew as abnormal experiences in university. Another participant who identified as a lower-income student, indicated that his position as lower-income provides him with more obstacles to being successful in university and more stress. This participant also felt that this was unfair, as he felt most of the more affluent students do not have this added stress. Lastly, and as mentioned previously, both affiliate college students also expressed experiences with poor mental health through the experience of a near student tragedy of one of their peers (Participant 08) and managing bipolar disorder and an eating disorder (Participant 09) while in university. Both of these participants felt that their experiences were outside of what would be normal for most university students to experience.

5.3.1 Stress and Anxiety from Factors Associated with Massification

Participants also recognized factors associated with massification and felt that these factors contributed to their feelings of stress and anxiety. These factors included motivational

orientations for pursuing a higher education, the size of classes, contact with professors and faculty members, disengagement, and mental health resource access.

As noted in the literature review, there are two broad categories of motivation for attending university. Instrumental motivations involve the pursuit of higher education for more practical reasons, such as obtaining a degree to get a job or to secure higher paid employment (Allais, 2014; Hickinbottom-Brawn & Burns, 2015; Lee & Brotheridge, 2005; Zelan, 1975). In contrast, intrinsic motivations involve the pursuit of higher education for the development of further knowledge and an interest in understanding topics holistically and from all points of view (Allais, 2014; Côté & Allahar, 2012; Lee & Brotheridge, 2005). In the current study, almost all participants (9) saw university as the only pathway to becoming more competitive for the workforce or a specific job, expressing instrumental motivations. Some referred to university as one of the boxes that needed to be checked or a required step to gain employment and a higher income. Two participants believed that all students have some degree of instrumental motivations for obtaining a degree, with one indicating that this type of drive is necessary to both get accepted into university and to succeed in this institution. Two participants cited specific jobs that they wanted to pursue and for which they needed a university degree, namely Social Work and Physiology. Participants also acknowledged that further credentials may be necessary for competitiveness in the labour market, further elucidating the instrumental importance of attending higher education for the work force:

I know that now like with an [undergraduate] degree I guess in Geography there's not much out there in the job market. So, it's like kind of specializing in something after that.
- Participant 02

However, the majority of the participants (7) described that while they came into university thinking it was about obtaining a degree for better employment opportunities, once they were

immersed in the university environment, their outlook on the purpose of higher education began to change. These participants described a mix of instrumental and intrinsic motivations, indicating that the learning aspect of university had become just as or more important than academic outcomes:

I actually feel like I'm learning something and I can do something with what I'm learning... You know, before I think it was just putting on this face of yes, I'm gonna become a professional. And I'm gonna have this professional career. And that was the one thing that was important. But now I don't actually care about what people think about what my professional career would be after undergrad. Because I know that every day I'm learning something that will help me in the future... everything that I'm learning is nourishing my brain.

Participant 04

I think I'm personally a combination of the two. Like yes, I am here to get a degree and I'm here to do the best I possibly can. But I'm also here to learn about what is out there in the world, and what I can do with it and how it impacts... my life.

- Participant 07

I came here to pursue a goal to get to the job I wanna get to. But I'm starting to learn more and I guess when I first came here it was all about I'll go to school and then later on making a lot of money. But as I kind of go through the years, I'm starting to learn more and I'm kind of getting addicted to it. Like, learning all this stuff that like I would never have learned before.

- Participant 05

Other participants were more focused on intrinsic motivations, as they discussed the importance of enjoying their topic of study and the development of rich knowledge on the topic of interest. Participant 08 and 10 referred to their involvement in higher education as something they always wanted to do and that they value this pathway beyond a checked box for employment, instead conceptualizing university as a significant portion of their lives.

There was some indication that motivational orientations could cause a great deal of stress for students. Participants felt that instrumentally-motivated students were less likely to be involved on campus, were less likely to complete the academic work, and were more likely to privilege the social aspects of university. Many participants (7) linked instrumental motivations

to higher stress levels. There appeared to be a pressure associated with pursuing higher education for obtaining high grades or a degree, or to gain a degree as quickly as possible. Furthermore, Participant 10 articulated that being instrumentally motivated can result in more disappointment if students complete their degree and do not achieve optimal labour market outcomes.

Participants believed that those students who had instrumental motivations were less likely to enjoy the learning process and develop critical thinking skills, which in their views had negative impacts on the development of the individual more personally.

In contrast, respondents viewed students with intrinsic motivations as students who were more engaged in learning, more interested in course material, less focused on obtaining good grades, and more focused on developing rich knowledge. According to the participants, having an intrinsic motivation toward higher education allows students to build themselves personally, develop socially, and have a fulfilling experience in university. Interestingly, some participants felt that students, including themselves, who had more intrinsic motivations may face more stress in university. Participant 01 discussed how she has enjoyed the learning process but that her eyes have been opened to some serious social problems through her studies, the weight of which has negatively impacted her well-being. She noted that learning about social problems is “depressing” especially when considering whether change is possible. Participant 04 also mentioned how her studies impacted her well-being, but in more positive ways. She noted that she becomes “consumed” in her Sociological studies, and that because she is so interested in this field of study, she wants to learn more, even if the social problems she is learning about are difficult to face.

The second factor associated with massification that brought stress for students was related to the class sizes they had experienced. Respondents (4) indicated that it was more

difficult to make friends and to satisfy the social aspect of university when classes were large, which led to increased stress levels. Students also reported stress and anxiety related to participating in classes, and generally more stress if the class was large or if students felt uncomfortable with the group or professor. Some participants voiced concerns about their level of comfort with speaking in large classes and a certain degree of anxiety with participating in large classes. Some (2) participants felt that if classes were reduced in size, stress and anxiety would be easier to manage or would not exist at all. Participants noted that having more students in a classroom led to more intimidation when raising their hand and sharing their ideas:

I think like with a larger class size, there's a lot of people [and] I'm kind of included in there, that are afraid to ask questions. Cause there's like 400 students, 800 eyes... you don't wanna be the one that kind of asks questions.

- Participant 05

Interestingly, many of the participants (6) indicated that they felt more pressure and stress in smaller classes. First, this was related to their participation in classes and the stress and anxiety associated with raising their hand in a class of any size. These participants discussed that in smaller classes there was more pressure because it was more noticeable if they were not contributing to the class discussions. Further, they noted that smaller classes tended to have participation requirements, putting more pressure on students to participate as it impacts their grades. However, some participants also felt less pressure in smaller classes as the smaller number of students made them feel more comfortable and able to speak up in class:

Like, smaller classes I think there's a lot less pressure. There's like a lot less pressure on the students in there and I feel like more would participate. And I guess if you participate more you do better.

- Participant 05

Well, I like kind of love hate big classes. I don't like talking so much in class. So, I kind of like the big class cause then you don't really have to speak... But this year yeah, the smaller classes I find easier to like talk.

- Participant 03

Here, there appeared to be a tension between a preference for larger classes because there was less pressure to participate, but a desire to participate to improve their understanding of course material, and ultimately their grades.

Overall, there was very little difference in how students at main campus and those at the affiliate college conceptualized how class size impacted academics, despite vast differences in the size of their average classes. The affiliate students viewed their larger classes taken on main campus, and even their classes of 50 to 60 students, as inhibiting some factors related to academic success, such as contact with faculty:

In the classes with 50 or 60, you could definitely still talk to your [professor] but it wasn't as easy. It would be more like you would have to seek them out in an office hour... where in like my class with 10 kids in it, it was just easier.

- Participant 09, affiliate student

The only difference was that affiliate students felt further intimidation raising their hands in classes that were held on main campus for fear of any potential reactions from the other students in the class:

It can be a bit intimidating if I want to say something. So, like if I'm in like a 30-person class at [the affiliate college], I have no issues about saying anything... But if I'm in like a big class down here at main campus, I notice that I'm a little more hesitant to voice opinions, make comments... ask questions. Just for fear of like any potential reaction.

- Participant 08

Third, and related to class sizes, participants conceptualized their relationships with professors or other students, or lack thereof, as causing them concern or stress. There was a perceived disconnect in large classes between professors and students, as well as between students, articulated by three participants:

Because the [professor] isn't... it's more like he's looking at this like, the whole picture, like a flat average... And you're kind of just a number. But it's not catered to like individual like learning experiences. I felt like the [professor] was kind of handed a median grade range and then he just needed to keep it at that. So, it's either like he had to

bell curve it so that kids who were failing like started to pass a bit or if the class did too well he would like curve it down.

- Participant 02

I have noticed that in classes that are larger, I don't do as well. And in classes that are smaller, I do better. And I think that it may even be because you have a more perceived relationship with the professor. So, even if you aren't going to their office hours and you're not doing anything to be one-on-one with the [professor], you feel like they have a higher expectation because there's a smaller number of people.

- Participant 07

Oh, I definitely see a correlation! I find that the smaller classes are, the more connected I feel with my professors... So, I, even though I sit at the front, I still do feel kind of [less] connected cause my [professor] is mostly teaching to the middle of the room and I'm like in the front like hello? So, definitely feel a little bit less connected... I do personally prefer smaller classes.

- Participant 08

Participants here noted that when there were less students in a class, it was easier to forge meaningful connections with professors that were perceived as important for academic success, and to connect with other students for studying purposes. Participants felt that they lacked more personal relationships with their professors due to intimidation to meet with them and a fear of looking unintelligent. Further, they felt that professors were too busy managing many students and classes to meet with every student.

In terms of social networking with other students, students felt stress in trying to immerse themselves in a new environment and make new friendships, but most participants felt that this was a normal part of university that inevitably improved over time. However, over-involvement in the social aspect of university often led to a cycle of ignoring the academic demands, procrastinating work, and over-privileging time with friends, which relates to the next factor that caused students stress.

Fourth, participants acknowledged that their disengagement behaviours produced stress and anxiety for them. They felt stress and anxiety related to studying behaviours for both

instances of under-preparing and over-preparing for courses or assignments. Study time varied significantly across participants, with the average study time at about 15 hours per week. Some participants reported as little as 7 hours per week (Participant 09), while others reported as much as 32 hours per week (Participant 08). Only two participants reported allocating the majority of their time to school work. These two participants felt they went above and beyond the requirements of class work to do optional or recommended readings to ensure they did not miss any content. Although most respondents did not find their time allocated to studying in university to be troubling academically, some felt stress and anxiety related to these behaviours. Five of the respondents felt that studying took time away from seeing their friends, and that they had to make a conscious effort to prioritize the academic aspect of university and to not be tempted by social gatherings, events, or spending time with friends. Most of these participants (4) indicated that there was a negative impact on their happiness by feeling like they had to prioritize the academic over the social to be successful in university. In some cases, this negative impact was counteracted by other factors, such as studying with a group of their friends (Participant 10) or attending smaller classes that were filled with their friends (Participant 07).

Another potential measure of student disengagement, and a potential source of stress for students, is the practice of completing work, readings, assignments, or studying last-minute. Most of the participants (7) reasoned that leaving assignments or studying until the last minute resulted in more stress, anxiety, or unhappiness due to a piling up of the academic work and overwhelming feelings:

I think if you do it like piece by piece, you get to exams and you're not like (gasps) so scared... So, managing your [time is] huge in university. [When you do things last-minute, you feel] less happy. Well stressed, like you're not happy, you're just stressed.
- Participant 02

Like last semester I had 3 assignments due in a row, the last week before exams. So, I was just a mess. Because I had so much work to do... I don't have a week to spend on each assignment... Everything's so close together, so then I feel like, yeah, you don't get to spend as much time on it. So, then I feel like my work isn't as good. Cause I haven't been putting as much effort... then you're more stressed out that it's not gonna be a good grade. I just feel like when you're so stressed out all you think about is no I have to study, I have all these exams, you don't have time for anything else. So, then I think you don't set aside time to like go with friends or go work out.

- Participant 03

This acknowledgement is interesting given that participants felt that the work they put into their academics was generally adequate enough for them to achieve good grades. Some participants even felt that they should not be completing the work last-minute, and that altering this behaviour would relieve stress, producing a contradictory view about the responsibility of the university to address students stress levels. In contrast, Participant 10 noted that students who are more stressed out may be more likely to procrastinate, resulting in a cycle of stress and anxiety for some students. These two narratives indicate a potential bi-directional or reciprocal relationship between stress and procrastination. In situations of inability to complete certain portions of the work, two participants noted that their friend groups were an important support system in helping them catch back up and reduce stress, suggesting that good social support networks can aid in the completion of academic work:

You know, when [my friend] didn't do a reading, like I would, it's not that I would parent him but I want us both to do well. So, him and I really push each other... So, for last week, I was having a horrible week. And he knew that I wasn't gonna have the readings done for tutorial. So, he's like don't worry, I got us for this... If he's up here and I'm like falling while we're climbing the mountain he's like hold on to my hand. And then we climb.

- Participant 04

I also feel like it's, just with my friend group and my social group, when I have done something and they haven't I like to give them the information and when they have done something that I haven't, I find that it's helpful to me.

- Participant 10

Many participants (7) indicated that stress and anxiety can come from both under-preparing for tests or assignments, as well as over-preparing and burning themselves out. There was a certain level of guilt and frustration associated with spending little time studying and completing assignments. On the other hand, participants also noted that spending an excessive amount of time studying can also result in frustration if they do not understand the content or if they are missing out on other aspects of university. Participant 03, 06, and 07 reflect this line of thinking as they discussed how spending too much time studying led to burn-out and second guessing their ideas and abilities. Stress from pulling all-nighters and cramming before exams were also examples of instances where students caused stress for themselves. Further, these disengagement behaviours tended to produce more stress for the participants as they felt they fell into a cycle of procrastination, disengagement, and stress.

There were several rationalizations for completing the work last-minute, such as poor time management or procrastination (7), prioritizing the social aspects of university (4), prioritizing other “more important” course work (4), delaying assignments worth a small percentage of their grade (2), and working better under pressure (1). One participant discussed her last-minute studying for exams in such a way that may indicate that students do not see anything wrong or abnormal with this behaviour:

Oh, yeah! Like every night, even though I spend quite a bit of time studying, every night before an exam I’m always cramming the night before. I’m always finishing papers the day they’re due... I’m an efficient student but I’m still a student and still learning, I’m not perfect!

- Participant 08

This quote demonstrates that some participants in the current study saw completing the work last-minute as simply a part of the process or normal university behaviour.

This rhetoric is also reflected in participants' suggestions that other students are engaging in the same behaviours. Participants (8) noted that their peers often share information on their procrastination and last-minute completion of the academic work. One participant noted that her peers probably do much less academic work than her in discussing that most of her peers do not complete readings whatsoever. Interestingly, many of the participants (6) found comfort in the admissions of their peers that they had not started an assignment or completed a reading when the participants had also not completed the work:

I think it's like you're all in it together. But it's like really important to do [the readings], so you're all sinking with the ship... So, if you don't do the readings and you hear someone else not doing it, you have a sense of oh it's okay, everyone else is doing it.
- Participant 05

Usually when I talk to [my friends], what I hear them say is no, I have not read that yet... It's a huge relief because I feel like, in comparison at least, I'm doing better.
- Participant 06

Yeah, definitely. I feel like if people are like oh I didn't do the readings for this class, I'd be like thank God, I'm not the only one!... I feel relieved that I'm not gonna be the only one who's a bit behind.
- Participant 08

Cause sometimes I'm like oh my god I'm such a slacker, like I can't do any of this stuff. And then you find out all your friends are in the same position, and you're like okay, we're okay!
- Participant 09

I think that for me personally, it makes me feel like oh I didn't really fail that badly if someone else is on the same page as me and someone else didn't really maybe get the time or just didn't do [the work] for whatever reason.
- Participant 10

Another measure of potential disengagement that was a source of stress for students involved class attendance. Half of the participants discussed how their attendance behaviours changed since first-year, as they began to see the importance of attending class and attended more of their lectures in second or third-year. Participants noted that missing classes only

occurred in dire circumstances of sickness (9), necessity due to appointments (3), poor weather (1), or complete exhaustion from off-campus work (1). This commitment to attendance was mainly due to a perception that missing classes meant they were missing content that was potentially examinable, which would cause them stress to miss. Participant 04 noted that they felt a great deal of guilt if they missed classes because her parents were funding her education. Due to this guilt, this participant would attend classes even if she was very sick, recalling a class she attended while ill with strep throat. Participant 08 even cast missing classes as “one of the seven deadly sins.” However, some (3) participants felt more comfortable missing a class when they had a friend who could share their notes with them. Yet, two of the participants felt this did not comfort them, as they noted a lack of trust in other students’ notes as they might have missed important content. In some cases, the participants (4) rationalized their class absences by noting that they had other academic work to complete that was more important. Others also rationalized class absences by stating that they could miss certain classes because they understood the content, could learn it better on their own, or had other priorities to attend to:

But I also felt like it depended on like the class. So, like some classes I would like never wanna miss and then like my Women’s Studies [classes], I missed a lot of those... I guess sometimes I felt like it wasn’t worth being in the class. And if the [professor] was just like not going to do anything then I felt like I could be more productive and like stay at home... This year I haven’t done that as much even if like the [professor] is useless.
- Participant 03

[The university] hired me to illustrate a children’s book and right now it’s eating me alive. Cause I have to finish this book, and I haven’t finished it... And Spanish lectures are two hours long. So, if I’m gonna sit there to learn my own language, something that I already know how it works and I use it every day, it’s okay for me to miss it. So, I’m gonna use those two hours to finish a drawing [for the book].
- Participant 04

Like, I’ve been pretty good but like, depends on some of the courses. I’ve had some courses in the past like you can [miss], it’s like 3 hours and they’re literally just reading off the lecture slides and it’s just like I can do this on my own and I can like do it better.
- Participant 05

Yeah, so if I had a paper that was due the next day, and it just wasn't getting done on the time that I had scheduled, I might like, if I had a friend who could go and take notes for me, then I would [skip class].

- Participant 07

I'm retaking [Introduction to Psychology] just to get a higher grade, I don't go to that one. I honestly think I've been twice this year... I have all of the information already.

- Participant 10

Here, there appeared to be an indication that certain classes could be missed, whether the topics came easy to participants or participants felt they understood the content and could teach it to themselves better than the professor.

Interestingly, participants discussed disengagement, but then felt a sense of conflict of identity if they did not receive the grades that they felt they deserved. This mismatch between their perceived identity and their accomplishments seems to indicate that students have high expectations of themselves coming into university. Yet, since many of them do not engage fully in the learning process, they are often met with feelings of failure or dissatisfaction.

In the next chapter, I will discuss how the main themes of the current study address the research questions of the current study. I will also ground these main themes in the existing literature. Further, I will discuss both the sociological and policy implications of the findings, the limitations of the current study, as well as some avenues for future research.

Chapter 6

6 Discussion and Conclusions

The goal of this research study was ultimately to understand how university students conceptualize factors associated with massification as impacting their well-being. These factors included large class sizes and student populations, contact with university staff and faculty, student engagement and disengagement, and access to and use of mental health resources. Specifically, this research aimed to answer the following research questions:

- 1) How do students perceive the massified university context?
 - a. Do they recognize the factors associated with massification at their university?
 - b. How do they describe the context of the university system and their place within it?
- 2) How do students conceptualize their well-being in relation to the factors associated with massification, such as growing student populations and class sizes, student disengagement, available resources, the instrumental value of higher education, and contact with faculty?

In this chapter I discuss the three main themes of this research and how these themes address the research questions. Next, I connect the results to the literature presented in chapters two and three to discuss the current study's contributions to existing research and theory regarding massification. Then, I discuss the implications of these findings, including potential policy implications. Finally, I point to some limitations within the current research design and suggest avenues for future research.

6.1 Overview of Findings and Relation to Existing Literature

The three main themes that emerged regarding the impact of the university system on student well-being were 1) perceptions that the university or professors are responsible for

certain aspects of university life that the participants found to cause them stress, 2) feelings of isolation and the availability of social support or social networks for students, and 3) students' conceptions of stress and anxiety in different aspects of university life. These themes are valuable for understanding how participants conceptualize their place in a massified university system, and the impacts they feel this environment has on student well-being. Below, these themes are discussed in terms of how they address the research questions of the current study, and are connected to previous literature.

6.1.1 Recognition and Perceptions of Massification

First, the research sought to establish how the factors associated with massification are perceived by students. Participants were asked about structures, patterns, and behaviours associated with massification, either for themselves, other students, or their university, and whether they recognized factors associated with massification at their university. In addressing the first research question, all participants resoundingly noted that they had experienced or perceived all of the main factors of concern in this study, namely the impacts of large class sizes, large student populations, instrumental motivations for attending university, little contact with faculty and other students, and student disengagement. In addition, participants perceived some potential limitations in the current mental health resources on-campus. Further, the participants indicated that these factors had both negative and positive effects on their academics, social relations with students and professors, as well as their well-being.

6.1.2 Students' Perceived Position in a Massified University

Participants felt that, due to a perception of the university system as a commercial entity, the university had a responsibility to optimize the learning and social environment for students, who respondents viewed as consumers purchasing a product in the university's commercial

form. There is a clear perception by participants that students are somewhat passive participants in the university system, whose position tasks them with little responsibility. Literature in this area supports participants' perceptions that higher education in North America has shifted to a commercial framework, where students are viewed as customers and degrees are viewed as products (Côté & Allahar, 2012; Fisher et al., 2016; Lee & Brotheridge, 2005; Maringe & de Wit, 2016; Maringe & Sing, 2014; Roksa & Robinson, 2016). Research also frames higher education in its commercial form as a system of mass certification, rather than a liberal education institution (Côté & Allahar, 2012; Fisher et al., 2016). However, the participants in the current study viewed this shift toward commercialization as affecting the university's responsibilities to their students or customers.

Participants' perceptions of university responsibility spanned many aspects of university life. First, they felt that the social events, like orientation week, should be restructured by the university to provide better experiences for off-campus students. The idea that extracurricular activities are important for university life is acknowledged in the literature (Flynn, 2014). The literature stops short of indicating that students feel that universities are responsible for facilitating social interactions between students during social events. Since mainly off-campus students in the current study reported negative experiences with social events such as orientation week, this may be a narrative specific to this group of students that warrants further research.

Next, participants felt that the university should prioritize student mental health through reallocating funds to mental health services, programs, and resources, as well as mending issues they perceived with current resources and raising more mental health awareness. Although participants were aware of the resources that were available on campus and had heard about them through professors, friends, and posters, some still felt that mental health awareness could

be prioritized more to reach all students who might be at risk of developing poor well-being. Literature is mixed on student awareness of mental health resources on their university campus, with some research indicating that student awareness is quite low (Yorgason et al., 2008), and other research indicating that students tend to report a generally high awareness of these resources (Heck et al., 2014).

Some participants took responsibility for their own mental health and well-being through self-regulation or more informal resources such as social support networks. The self-regulation of mental health or well-being by students is well-documented in the literature as an important avenue for students to manage their own well-being in lieu of using other resources. Research indicates that the development of mastery or the ability to self-regulate or manage mental health has a positive effect on student well-being (Bovier et al., 2004; Durand-Bush et al., 2015). However, some participants in the current study also felt that not all students have these informal resources to use, so on-campus resources must be well-structured to help students who need them. Similarly, research demonstrates that some students feel their university is not doing enough to reach students, as 86% of students in a Canadian university believed their school should develop better outreach programs to connect students to resources (Heck et al., 2014).

Although participants in the current study had low usage rates of on-campus resources, their ideas about the inadequacy of resources are reflected in the literature. Research has found that most campus resources refer their patients to off-campus services, do not have an on-site psychiatrist, and very few provide a full mental health assessment (Heck et al., 2014). It is not clear from the current research if these inadequacies are entirely reflected in the campus resources of the university of interest, however, some of the participants did express perceptions that the resources were not comprehensive or easy to access. Additionally, very few students in

the current study had used on-campus mental health resources, so it is important to note that their perceptions of these resources or the potential funding challenges are based on their own assumptions or the experiences of their peers, rather than first-hand experiences.

It is important to acknowledge that some of the perceptions of participants relating to their view of the commercialization of their university led them to make assertions about potential funding changes that they felt needed to take place. These changes included increases in funding for on-campus mental health resources to allow for better student access and changes in the structure of classrooms to allow for more direct contact between professors and students. Both suggestions by participants would require major alterations to the current funding structures of universities, and point to a potential lack of understanding by students of challenges for universities in terms of the development and practice of policies and the allocation of resources. So, while participants did indicate that their university should be receptive to student needs in changing certain policies and resource allocation, they may be unaware of the intricacies of funding challenges for these universities.

Participants expressed their passive role in the classroom as well, as they felt that professors had a duty to engage, entertain, and keep students interested in course material, particularly during their course lectures. They thought that professors promoted student engagement by being passionate about their work, being available for extended meetings with students, and through their teaching methods used in classes. Further, respondents asserted that a student's engagement and attitude toward a class was entirely dependent on the professor's approach. Research does indicate that in larger classes, students are less likely to be engaged in the course material (Allais, 2014; Côté & Allahar, 2012), and students in a massified university system are held less accountable for their engagement (Corbin & Baron, 2012; Côté & Allahar,

2012). Research has also found that when students become disengaged, the pressure usually falls on professors to re-engage them (Corbin & Baron, 2012). However, Côté and Allahar (2012) argue that there is a bilateral contract in university between students and teachers that involves both parties being actively involved in the learning process and putting forth effort. This bilateral contract involves effort from students and teachers in a reciprocal nature (Flynn, 2014). Some participants in the current study felt that their effort was important in making connections with professors, but still felt that a professor's approach and passion in lectures set the tone for the environment and could keep students interested in a topic of study. This line of linking is paralleled in Lumby's (2012) work on high school students. Lumby found that participants acknowledged their own disengagement to some degree, but they also blamed the school system in terms of perceptions of uncaring teachers or the demands of school as too overwhelming, for their disengagement and their stress levels.

The literature points to a trend toward entitled disengagement, where students disengage from the learning process, expect professors to keep their attention, while still expecting high grades for low effort (Côté & Allahar, 2012; Kuh et al., 2008). The students in the current study reflected this culture of entitled disengagement to some degree, indicating that they completed the work last-minute and disengaged from lectures but still believed that obtaining high grades in university was important to them.

Despite these three assertions of university responsibility and their role as passive observers, participants also felt that students' personal growth and the development of independence in university should be prioritized. They noted that personal growth and independence were personal accomplishments that required them to take responsibility for their academics, their social experiences, and their overall experience in university. This is interesting,

and contradictory, given that most participants tasked the university with responsibilities that they then claimed they needed to be responsible for in order to grow personally and develop independence. Côté and Allahar (2012) argue that the shift toward commercialization in universities leads to less personal growth for students, demeaning the value of a higher education and not allowing for the transformative process that university should be focused on.

Interestingly, the participants in the current study felt the university and professors were responsible for some aspects of the university experience, but also felt that they had experienced a great deal of personal growth.

6.1.3 Student Well-being Related to Massification

With regard to the second research question, participants discussed several facets of university life related to massification that they felt impacted student well-being through the development of stress, anxiety, or feelings of isolation. This is an important finding given the focus of most previous research on academic outcomes. Research suggests that the normative time of transition to university coincides with the normative timing of the development of poor well-being (Knowlden et al., 2016; Kruisselbrink Flatt, 2013; Laidlaw et al., 2016; Nunes et al., 2014). Further, nearly 30% of university students report psychological stress (Durand-Bush et al., 2015) from financial burden, unhealthy eating habits, and alcohol over-consumption (Adlaf et al., 2001; Kruisselbrink Flatt, 2013), making university a time in which individuals are particularly vulnerable to stress and anxiety.

Participants had two distinct narratives for the emergence of stress and anxiety in university. First, some participants conceptualized some of the stress they faced as simply a part of the university process. This normal stress included difficulty making friends in a new environment, exam and academic stress, and feeling out of place, which participants thought

were similar concerns for most students. Further, some participants felt that the topics they were studying in school caused them stress, but that it was important to learn about serious social problems even if they were hard to face. Some felt that facing stress in university gave them the opportunity to develop positive coping strategies that would be beneficial for their future. Previous research suggests that university can be a site for the development of positive self-esteem but it can also be a site for stress and pressure that negatively impacts student happiness and well-being (Adlaf et al., 2001; Bore et al., 2015; Finley, 2016; Knowlden et al., 2016; Kruisselbrink Flatt, 2013; Martin, 2010; Wrench et al., 2013).

The second narrative involved students' perceptions that some of the stress associated with university that they experienced was abnormal or created undue harm for students. This stress involved participants feeling like they had to stay up all night to study for exams or complete assignments, unreasonable exam schedules, and unreasonable departmental grading standards that made participants feel like they could not succeed due to structural constraints on their grades. Within these two narratives, participants conceptualized their experiences of stress and anxiety in relation to factors associated with massification.

In addressing whether students felt the factors associated with massification impacted their well-being, participants discussed how some of these factors created an atmosphere of stress and pressure for students and fostered feelings of isolation or loneliness. First, participants felt that students' motivational orientations could be related to stress in university. Motivational orientations are noted in the literature as impacting students' experiences in university in terms of what they get out of a university education, student happiness, and student stress levels (Hamilton Bailey & Phillips, 2015; Lee & Brotheridge, 2005). It is important to note that most participants in this study claimed to have a mix of instrumental and intrinsic motivations, but felt

that their intrinsic motivations outweighed their instrumental. Some felt that students with instrumental motivations faced more stress due to a focus on obtaining their degree as quickly as possible, not enjoying the learning process, and over-privileging the social aspect of university while under-valuing the academic. Research does support this, as studies have found that students with instrumental motivations tend to struggle to meet the demands of higher education (Hamilton Bailey & Phillips, 2015). Further, research indicates that students with instrumental motivations tend to develop poor well-being, which can involve stress and anxiety, as these students' over-value extrinsic outcomes (Lee & Brotheridge, 2005).

In contrast, participants felt that students with intrinsic motivations tended to have lower stress levels and higher levels of well-being because they were more focused on learning and developing skills while growing personally alongside their academics. Research indicates that students with intrinsic motivations tend to receive higher grades, are more satisfied overall with university, and have higher well-being on average, indicating less stress and anxiety (Hamilton Bailey & Phillips, 2015). One source of stress for students related to motivational orientations in the literature was the pressure associated with feeling like they had to attend university as it was the normal and only option (Fallis, 2016; Trow, 1961; Trow, 2000). For students in the current study, this stress was not a focus because many of the participants discussed more intrinsic motivations for choosing to attend university. This may also be a result of selection bias, as more engaged students may have volunteered for the study.

Second, participants felt that class size had the potential to impact student well-being, stress, and anxiety. They felt that participating in large classes caused them a great deal of stress because they felt like everyone was watching them and they feared being wrong and looking unintelligent. Research reflects this finding, as students in other studies reported anxiety when

raising their hands in large classes (Beattie & Thiele, 2016; Guder et al., 2009; Maringe & Sing, 2014). Further, the relationship between participating in classes and anxiety appears to be cyclical, as research has also demonstrated that students who experience social anxiety are less likely to participate (Brook & Willoughby, 2015). Students report more positive experiences in smaller classes and have an easier time participating in cases that are small (Beattie & Thiele, 2016; Guder et al., 2009; Maringe & Sing, 2014). However, participants in the current study also indicated that participating in small classes where they feel less comfortable with the professor or their classmates also caused them stress.

Related to class size, participants felt that their relationships with professors had the potential to cause them stress as well. Most participants in this study did not meet regularly with professors due to intimidation, feelings that professors were too busy, and a fear that their questions or concerns would make them look unintelligent. Participants indicated that when classes are large, these feelings are amplified because of a perceived disconnect between professors and students. Previous research reflects this narrative, as larger classes are cast as negative for student learning due to high student to teacher ratios (Côté & Allahar, 2012) that are not optimal for forging meaningful connections between teachers and students (Allais, 2014; Beattie & Thiele, 2016; Corbin & Baron, 2012; Guder et al., 2009; Maringe & Sing, 2014). Research has also indicated that large classes hinder students' abilities to meet with professors outside of class (Feld & Grofman, 1977; Hickinbottom-Brawn & Burns, 2015) and for them to receive formative feedback on their work (Allais, 2014; Hockings et al., 2008). This can lead to student disengagement, frustration, and stress (Allais, 2014; Hockings et al., 2008), as well as dissatisfaction and lower class ratings in larger classes (Crittenden et al., 1975; Maringe & Sing, 2014). Further, shifts in teaching methods that accompany the trend toward massification,

namely the use of lecture-based methods and technology, negatively impact the ability of students and teachers to meet, social network, and forge meaningful relationships (Allais, 2014; Côté & Allahar, 2012; Trow, 2000; Trow, 2006). Contact with professors for the development of positive social networks is cited in the literature as important for student academic achievement and social relationships, but is negatively affected by a lack of interaction (Beattie & Thiele, 2016), something the participants in the current study acknowledged.

For participants, the creation of positive social ties and social networks were important parts of university that lessened feelings of isolation. This is in line with research that indicates that students in university tend to conceptualize their well-being in relation to the quality of their contact with faculty members or other students (Lin, 2017). Feelings of isolation or alienation are important to note, as research indicates that students whose basic needs of love or belonging are not met are at increased risk of developing poor well-being (Türkdoğan & Duru, 2012). Participants reported feeling isolated due to feeling like a number in such a large institution and in large classes, which made creating meaningful relationships with other students and professors more difficult. This was directly related to their perceptions of the size of their university campus, but participants had mixed views on the impact of having a large student population. Some felt that having more students on one campus made it more difficult to make friends, as they felt like just another face in the crowd. Others felt that having more students on campus gave them access to a larger number of students with whom they could connect and more diversity in backgrounds, cultures, and viewpoints. These students also felt that large student populations made it possible for their university to have a wide variety of extracurricular activities that can help students to connect with the institution and their peers. Research reflects this assertion by students that as universities grow, student populations become more diverse and

this is positive for interactions between students (Lin, 2017; Maringe & Sing, 2014). This research also indicates that having more diverse student populations can allow for the development of more varied groups, clubs, and organizations that can help facilitate social interactions between students (Lin, 2017; Maringe & Sing, 2014)

Feelings of isolation, alienation, or exclusion, may be magnified for lower-income students. Given only one participant identified as a lower-income student, the data was limited in establishing clear connections between SES and social interactions on-campus. This participant felt that due to his SES, he was limited in the social connections he could make due to having to work off-campus and spending minimal time on-campus. Further, this participant felt that this lower-income status made him less likely to fit into the university community, as he perceived most students to be more affluent than him, and as such he felt other students could not understand his struggles. Research does indicate that lower-income and first-generation students have a harder time fitting into university life, and become increasingly less likely to meet with professors or other students outside of class as class size increases, hindering their ability to form social networks with professors or other students (Beattie & Thiele, 2016). Research also demonstrates that lower-income students face more financial barriers to accessing higher education due to increased tuition costs and rising student debt (Clark, 2000; Flynn, 2014; Murray, 2008). In line with this, this participant felt that loan programs could be more plentiful to allow lower-income students to participate more in the university environment by allowing them to forego off-campus work. Currently there are several provincial level loans programs, as well as the Canada Student Loans Program, that students who require financial assistance can apply for (Plager & Chen, 1999). While these programs are aimed at giving students the opportunity to opt-out of off-campus work while in university (Sunter, 1992), the narrative of the

lower-income participant in the current study seems to indicate that these loans may not be enough or may be difficult to access.

Lastly, participants acknowledged that some of their own behaviours related to disengagement caused them stress and anxiety. Student engagement involves participating fully in the school community and the learning process, as well as enjoying the learning process (Corbin & Baron, 2012; Wang & Peck, 2013). Although student disengagement in university is not a direct outcome of massification, it is thought to be exacerbated by shifts toward commercialization in a massified university context (Côté & Allahar, 2012). Participants felt stress related to studying, completing the academic work last-minute, and under-preparing or over-preparing for assessments. Participants also reported anxiety related to missing classes as they felt that when they missed a class they were missing potentially testable content. There is limited research that demonstrates that disengagement results in higher levels of depression in students (Wang & Peck, 2013). Research does indicate that students who are more stressed out or those who experience poor well-being will have trouble negotiating the academic spaces of university (Ennals et al., 2015), which may speak to this cycle that participants have pointed out in their study and disengagement behaviours. Literature has also been conducted on how disengagement behaviours, such as completing the work last-minute, are linked to poor well-being outcomes, such as later depression (Wang & Peck, 2013).

Despite most respondents reporting low commitments to studying in terms of the number of hours spent studying per week, they felt that their study behaviours were not troubling, as they had other priorities to attend to. The study behaviours of participants in the current study were similar to that in the literature, with data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) indicating that most students dedicate around 10 hours a week to school work, and 60 to

70% of university students exhibit some degree of disengagement (Côté & Allahar, 2012). The literature also indicates that university should be treated like a full-time job, and that students should be putting in about 40 hours per week between preparing for classes, attending classes, and studying or reading (Côté & Allahar, 2012). Additionally, participants felt that their study behaviours were not troubling because they felt that other students were also disengaging from the learning process, and they felt comfort in admissions of their peers that they were completing the academic work last-minute and neglecting to study. This is interesting because participants acknowledged the importance of studious behaviours for reducing stress but then rationalized their disengagement.

Further, students felt that prioritizing the social aspect of university rather than the academic resulted in more stress and ultimately a cycle of stress and procrastination that they felt they could not break out of. Interestingly, participants acknowledged their disengagement but indicated feelings of failure and a conflict of identity when they received grades that were much lower than they felt they deserved, despite also acknowledging that they sometimes put little effort into their academics. This conflict of identity is important because literature demonstrates that student happiness is influenced most by students' perceptions of their self-image (Flynn & MacLeod, 2015), which may be influenced by feelings of a conflict of identity through receiving poor grades. Furthermore, research confirms that the university environment can be a site for the development of positive self-esteem and self-image, but that it can also be a site for stress and pressure that can threaten a student's self-image and their well-being (Adlaf et al., 2001; Bore et al., 2015; Knowlden et al., 2016; Kruisselbrink Flatt, 2013; Martin, 2010; Wrench et al., 2013).

6.2 Sociological Implications and Contributions

Given that the sample in this study was small and non-random, the findings and

narratives of participants represent only a small portion of the views that students have and may not be representative of student views in general. This limitation presents challenges for developing strong sociological implications of the findings, but based on the narratives of participants a few implications can be discussed. First, the research clearly demonstrates that students are aware of factors associated with massification in their university, and that students connect these factors to perceptions of their well-being. The findings indicate that, among these students, there are aspects of a massified university system that negatively impact students' feelings of well-being. Further, the findings provide insight into students' views that the university is responsible for student well-being. This finding presents a novel viewpoint that is not reflected in previous literature.

Participants in this study also pointed to several avenues where potential policy changes could address their concerns. These included ideas about the implementation of smaller classes to facilitate more contact with professors and optimize the learning environment, re-organizing orientation week and other social events to improve experiences for off-campus students, improved advertising of on-campus mental health resources, and policies instituted to address perceived problems with current mental health resources that exist at this university. Participants also felt that they need more input in creating an environment in higher education that is conducive to positive outcomes for students. More research will need to be conducted to determine whether these narratives are found with a larger, more diverse research sample in order to determine more specific policy implications.

However, based on the narratives of participants and linkages to the literature, there are some potential changes on a student-level that could be made. Due to the intended nature of university for students to develop their identities, grow personally, and complete the academic

work independently without strict faculty guidance, some of the change must come from students. Students must be cognizant of their disengagement behaviours and work to reduce them if they intend to obtain high grades and a high level of understanding. Further, the development of connections with other students and faculty can be facilitated by students putting in the effort to make these connections, rather than expecting the university to facilitate these connections.

Finally, in a massified university system, with a diverse student population, a variety of students with a variety of abilities and knowledge bases will be entering the university system. This is because there has been a shift in norms, as noted by the participants, that university is required for gainful employment, and the only real option in their eyes and those around them following high school. This is reflected in the narratives of participants in the current study that while they chose to attend university to learn and grow, they were also aware that a university degree makes entering the labour market less difficult. Altering societal norms and labour market dynamics would be incredibly difficult. But the current study does point to some problems with casting university as the only option, and not attending as a failure. One participant even mentioned that university may not be the path for everyone, and while those people may feel defeated, it is okay to figure out what type of school, career, or life path works best for each student or person. Ultimately, the university system has grown so large that it's intended purpose and liberal education structure has become lost in the process, leading more students to enter university not because they want to, but they feel that they must in order to make it in the current labour market. A shift in norms would allow students to play to their strengths and attend the program or institution that fit their skills and their goals.

6.3 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

There were a few limitations in the current study and research design that should be

acknowledged. The sample was limited in two main ways. First, due to the scope of the research, the sample size is small. Increasing the number of respondents may increase generalizability as more student experiences would be represented. Second, mainly second-year, middle to upper class, female students in the Faculty of Social Science volunteered for participation in the study. Future research should focus on obtaining a wider range of participants in terms of their gender, age, department, socio-economic status, and year of study. This is important because student experiences may vary across gender, age, time in university, and department of study and this greater variety in student experiences could lead to the emergence of different themes related to perceptions of massification.

Further, the current study focused on one university, establishing its place in the transition to massification, and analyzed the narratives of students at this one institution. It would be interesting for future research to compare the narratives of students at different institutions, universities at different stages in the process to massification and of different sizes. This may provide evidence of varied experiences within different massified institutions or between massified and non-massified universities.

There also are several other avenues for future research that were suggested by the narratives of participants in the current study. One factor associated with massification that the current study did not cover was grade inflation. Some of the participants referenced potential grade inflation, but the data was too limited to explore links between massification and potential grade inflation. This would be an interesting avenue for future research. Participants also discussed ideas of competition between students, which could be an important factor to explore more in-depth. This may be linked to social interactions, living arrangements of students (on-campus versus off-campus) and family SES. Students in the current study who varied on these

dimensions indicated somewhat different experiences, however there was not enough data to draw conclusions. Lastly, while the current study focused broadly on well-being, a study that focuses more specifically on mental health might provide a more in-depth view into the lives of students and how the university context impacts them.

6.4 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to understand student perceptions of massification and how factors associated with this transformation affect student well-being. Through in-depth, semi-structured interviews, the lived experiences of second and third-year students provided insight into their views of the current state of higher education and the impact this environment has on students. The current study contributes to the literature in this area by adding a Canadian context to massification research. It is important to note that much of the findings in this study reflect previous research, indicating a similar pattern of experiences for students in Canada and other countries. Although the results of the current study support those from previous quantitative research in this area, this study provides a more in-depth look at massification and its impacts from the perspectives of students immersed in this environment.

Two main contributions are evident from the findings. First, students do recognize factors associated with massification, even in their own behaviours, and they see these factors as having negative consequences for student well-being through pressure, stress, and anxiety. Second, from these experiences, particularly their view of the university as a business, participants conceptualized their place in the university system as more of a passive observer, while taking some responsibility for managing their own well-being through self-regulation. Here, they felt that the onus was on the university, in most regards, to fix some of the problems they identified

as having a negative impact on the well-being of themselves or other students. This study lays the ground work for future research that can further explore some of the insights.

References

- Adlaf, E. M., Gliksman, L., Demers, A., & Newton-Taylor, B. (2001). The prevalence of elevated psychological distress among Canadian undergraduates: Findings from the 1998 Canadian campus survey. *Journal of American College Health, 50*(2), 67-72. doi:10.1080/07448480109596009
- Alarcon, G. M., Edwards, J. M., & Menke, L. E. (2011). Student burnout and engagement: A test of the conservation of resources theory. *The Journal of Psychology, 145*(3), 211-227.
- Allais, S. (2014). A critical perspective on large class teaching: The political economy of massification and the sociology of knowledge. *Higher Education, 67*(6), 721-734. doi:10.1007/s10734-013-9672-2
- Barbosa, M. L. & Dwyer, T. (2016). Higher education in crisis: Critical voices from emerging countries. In J. E. Côté, & A. Furlong (Eds.) *Routledge handbook of the Sociology of higher education*, (pp. 315-324). New York, NY: Taylor and Francis.
- Beattie, I. R., & Thiele, M. (2016). Connecting in class? College class size and inequality in academic social capital. *Journal of Higher Education, 87*(3), 332.
- Bennett, S. (2016). The digital revolution in higher education: Rhetoric and reality. In J. E. Côté, & A. Furlong (Eds.) *Routledge handbook of the Sociology of higher education*, (pp. 328-336). New York, NY: Taylor and Francis.
- Bore, M., Pittolo, C., Kirby, D., Dluzewska, T., & Marlin, S. (2015). Predictors of psychological distress and well-being in a sample of Australian undergraduate students. *Higher Education Research & Development, 35*(5), 869-880.
- Bovier, P. A., Chamot, E., & Perneger, T. V. (2004). Perceived stress, internal resources, and social support as determinants of mental health among young adults. *Quality of Life Research, 13*(1), 161-70. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/B:QURE.0000015288.43768.e4>
- Brook, C. A. & Willoughby, T. (2015). The social ties that bind: Social anxiety and academic achievement across the university years. *J Youth Adolescence, 44*, 1139-1152. doi: 10.1007/s10964-015-0262-8
- Brown, P. (2016). The transformation of higher education, credential competition, and the graduate labour market. In J. E. Côté, & A. Furlong (Eds.) *Routledge handbook of the Sociology of higher education*, (pp. 197-205). New York, NY: Taylor and Francis.
- Burris, J. L., Brechtiny, E. H., Salsman, J., & Carlson, C. R. (2009). Factors associated with the psychological well-being and distress of university students. *Journal of American College Health, 57*(5), 536-543.
- Chen, E. & Oderkirk, J. (1997). Varied pathways: The undergraduate experience in Ontario.

Statistics Canada: Education Quarterly Review, 4(3), 47-62.

- Chow, H. P. H. (2007). Psychological well-being and scholastic achievement among university students in a Canadian prairie city. *Social Psychology of Education*, 10(4), 483-493. Retrieved from <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/cgi-bin/ezpauthn.cgi?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/622028403?accountid=15115>
- Clark, W. (2000). 100 years of education. *Statistics Canada: Canadian Social Trends*, 1-7.
- Condra, M., Dineen, M., Gills, H., Jack-Davies, A., & Condra, E. (2015). Academic accommodations for postsecondary students with mental health disabilities in Ontario, Canada: A review of the literature and reflections on emerging issues. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, 28(3), 277-291. Retrieved from <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/cgi-bin/ezpauthn.cgi?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1773219698?accountid=15115>
- Cooke, R., Bewick, B. M., Barkham, M., Bradley, M., & Audin, K. (2006). Measuring, monitoring and managing the psychological well-being of first year university students. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 34(4), 505-517. doi: 10.1080/03069880600942624
- Corbin, L., & Baron, P. (2012). Student engagement: Rhetoric and reality. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 31(6), 759-772. doi:10.1080/07294360.2012.655711
- Côté, J. E., & Allahar, A. L. (2012). Lowering Higher Education: The Rise of Corporate Universities and the Fall of Liberal Education. University of Toronto Press: Toronto, ON.
- Côté, J. E., & Furlong, A. (2016). Introduction: The history and scope of the sociology of higher education. In J. E. Côté, & A. Furlong (Eds.) *Routledge handbook of the Sociology of higher education*, (pp. 1-16). New York, NY: Taylor and Francis.
- Crittenden, K. S., Norr, J. L., & Lebailly, R. K. (1975). Size of university classes and student evaluations of teaching. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 46(4), 461-470.
- Durand-Bush, N., McNeill, K., Harding, M., & Dobransky, J. (2015). Investigating stress, psychological well-being, mental health functioning, and self-regulation capacity among university undergraduate students: Is this population optimally functioning? *Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy*, 49(3), 253-274. Retrieved from <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/cgi-bin/ezpauthn.cgi?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1756534833?accountid=15115>
- Ennals, P., Fossey, E., & Howie, L. (2015). Postsecondary study and mental ill-health: A meta-synthesis of qualitative research exploring students' lived experiences. *Journal of Mental Health*, 24(2), 111-119. doi:10.3109/09638237.2015.1019052

- Errey, R., & Wood, G. (2011). Lessons from a student engagement pilot study: Benefits for students and academics. *The Australian Universities' Review*, 53(1), 21-34.
- Fagan, R. W. (1994). Social well-being in university students. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 23(2), 237-249. Retrieved from <https://www-lib-uwo-ca.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/cgi-bin/ezpauthn.cgi?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/docview/60055723?accountid=15115>
- Fallis, G. (2016). The university and society: Structural change and conflicting roles. In J. E. Côté, & A. Furlong (Eds.) *Routledge handbook of the Sociology of higher education*, (pp. 19-27). New York, NY: Taylor and Francis.
- Feld, S. L. & Grofman, B. (1977). Variation in class size, the class size paradox, and some consequences for students. *Research in Higher Education*, 6, 215-222.
- Fink, J. E. (2014). Flourishing: Exploring predictors of mental health within the college environment. *Journal of American College Health*, 62(6), 380-388. doi:10.1080/07448481.2014.917647
- Finley, A. (2016). Well being: An essential outcome for higher education. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 48(2), 14-19.
- Fisher, D., Metcalfe, A. S., & Field, C. (2016). The structural force exerted by marketization on higher education systems, research universities and academic researchers. In J. E. Côté, & A. Furlong (Eds.) *Routledge handbook of the Sociology of higher education*, (pp. 63-70). New York, NY: Taylor and Francis.
- Flynn, D. (2014). Baccalaureate attainment of college students at 4-year institutions as a function of student engagement behaviors: Social and academic student engagement behaviors matter. *Research in Higher Education*, 55(5), 467-493. doi:10.1007/s11162-013-9321-8
- Flynn, D. M. & MacLeod, S. (2015). Determinants of happiness in undergraduate university students. *College Student Journal*, 49(3), 452-460.
- Guder, F., Malliaris, M., & Jalilvand, A. (2009). Changing the culture of a school: The effect of larger class size on instructor and student performance. *American Journal of Business Education*, 2(9), 83.
- Hamilton Bailey, T. & Phillips, L. J. (2015). The influence of motivation and adaptation on students' subjective well-being, meaning in life and academic performance. *Higher Educational Research & Development*, 35(2), 201-216.
- Hango, D. & de Broucker, P. (2007). Postsecondary enrolment trends to 2031: Three scenarios. *Statistics Canada: Culture, Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistics*, 1-108.

- Hayes, D. & Wynyard, R. (2016). The Mcdonaldization of higher education revisited. In J. E. Côté, & A. Furlong (Eds.) *Routledge handbook of the Sociology of higher education*, (pp. 74-83). New York, NY: Taylor and Francis.
- Heck, E., Jaworska, N., DeSomma, E., Dhoopar, A. S., MacMaster, F. P., Dewey, D., & MacQueen, G. (2014). A survey of mental health services at post-secondary institutions in Alberta. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry / La Revue Canadienne De Psychiatrie*, 59(5), 250-258. Retrieved from <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/cgi-bin/ezpauthn.cgi?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1617239205?accountid=15115>
- Hickinbottom-Brawn, S., & Burns, D. P. (2015). The problem of first-year seminars: Risking disengagement through marketplace ideals. *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 45(2), 154.
- Hockings, C., Cooke, S., Yamashita, H., McGinty, S., & Bowl, M. (2008). Switched off? A study of disengagement among computing students at two universities. *Research Papers in Education*, 23(2), 191-201. doi:10.1080/02671520802048729
- Holland, N. E. (2010). Postsecondary education preparation of traditionally underrepresented college students: A social capital perspective. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 3(2), 111-125. doi: 10.1037/a0019249
- Hout, M. (2012). Social and economic returns to college education in the United States. *The Annual Review of Sociology*, 38, 379-400. doi: 10.1146/annurev.soc.012809.102503
- Jagdeo, A., Cox, B. J., Stein, M. B., & Sareen, J. (2009). Negative attitudes toward help seeking for mental illness in 2 population-based surveys from the United States and Canada. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry / La Revue Canadienne De Psychiatrie*, 54(11), 757-766. Retrieved from <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/cgi-bin/ezpauthn.cgi?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/742969619?accountid=15115>
- Knowlden, A. P., Hackman, C. L., & Sharma, M. (2016). Lifestyle and mental health correlates of psychological distress in college students. *Health Education Journal*, 75(3), 370-382. doi:10.1177/0017896915589421
- Kraft, D. P. (2011). One hundred years of college mental health. *Journal of American College Health*, 59(6), 477-481. doi:10.1080/07448481.2011.569964
- Kruisselbrink Flatt, A. (2013). A suffering generation: Six factors contributing to the mental health crisis in North American higher education. *College Quarterly*, 16(1), 17. Retrieved from <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/cgi-bin/ezpauthn.cgi?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1651852277?accountid=15115>
- Kuh, G. D., Cruce, T. M., Shoup, R., Kinzie, J., & Gonyea, R. M. (2008). Unmasking the effects of student engagement on first-year college grades and persistence. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 79(5), 540-563. doi:10.1353/jhe.0.0019

- Laidlaw, A., McLellan, J., & Ozakinci, G. (2016). Understanding undergraduate student perceptions of mental health, mental well-being and help-seeking behaviour. *Studies in Higher Education*, 41(12), 2156-2168. doi:10.1080/03075079.2015.1026890
- Lee, R. T., & Brotheridge, C. M. (2005). Correlates and consequences of degree purchasing among Canadian university students. *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 35(2), 71-97. Retrieved from <https://www-lib-uwo-ca.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/cgi-bin/ezpauthn.cgi?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/docview/221211151?accountid=15115>
- Lehmann, W. (2014). Habitus transformation and hidden injuries: Successful working-class university students. *Sociology of Education*, 87(1), 1-15. doi:10.1177/0038040713498777
- Lin, Y. (2017). Subjective well-being experiences of Taiwanese university students. *Education*, 137(3), 333-343. Retrieved from <https://www-lib-uwo-ca.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/cgi-bin/ezpauthn.cgi?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1895984012?accountid=15115>
- Lumby, J. (2012). Disengaged and disaffected young people: Surviving the system. *British Educational Research Journal*, 38(2), 261-279. doi: 10.1080/01411926.2010.541553
- Maringe, F. & de Wit, H. (2016). Global higher education partnerships: Equity and epistemic concerns with distribution of intellectual capital. In J. E. Côté, & A. Furlong (Eds.) *Routledge handbook of the Sociology of higher education*, (pp. 299-312). New York, NY: Taylor and Francis.
- Maringe, F., & Sing, N. (2014). Teaching large classes in an increasingly internationalising higher education environment: Pedagogical, quality and equity issues. *Higher Education*, 67(6), 761-782. doi:10.1007/s10734-013-9710-0
- Martin, J. M. (2010). Stigma and student mental health in higher education. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 29(3), 259-274. doi:10.1080/07294360903470969
- Matta, B. N., Guzman, J. M., Stockly, S. K., & Widner, B. (2015). Class size effects on student performance in a Hispanic-serving institution. *Rev Black Polit Econ*, 42, 443-457.
- McDonough, P. M. & Miller, C. E. (2016). The forces of persistent equality: Minority statuses in higher education. In J. E. Côté, & A. Furlong (Eds.) *Routledge handbook of the Sociology of higher education*, (pp. 153-162). New York, NY: Taylor and Francis.
- Miller, W. L. & Crabtree, B. F. (2004). Depth interviewing. In S. N. Hesse-Biber & P. Leavy (Eds). *Approaches to qualitative research: A reader on theory and practice*, (pp. 185-201). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Mitchell, S. L., Darrow, S. A., Haggerty, M. & Neill, T. (2012). Curriculum infusion as college

- student mental health promotion strategy. *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy*, 26, 22-38. doi: 10.1080/87568225.2012.633038
- Murray, C. (2008). Are too many people going to college? *The Journal of the American Enterprise Institute*, 1-11.
- Murray, S. (2000). University education: Recent trends in participation, accessibility and returns. *Statistics Canada: Education Quarterly Review*, 6(4), 24-32.
- NCH Software. (2001). Express Scribe Transcription Software [Computer software]. Retrieved from http://www.nch.com.au/scribe/index.html?ns=true&kw=express%20scribe&gclid=EAIaIQobChMI3JHOIKPx2wIVEb7ACh1mNQWcEAAYASAAEgISfD_BwE
- Noy, C. (2008). Sampling knowledge: The hermeneutics of snowball sampling in qualitative research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 11(4), 327-344. doi:10.1080/13645570701401305
- Nunes, M., Walker, J. R., Syed, T., De Jong, M., Stewart, D. W., Provencher, M. D., Swinson, R., Ferrari J., & Furer, P. (2014). A national survey of student extended health insurance programs in postsecondary institutions in Canada: Limited support for students with mental health problems. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne*, 55(2), 101-109. Retrieved from <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/cgi-bin/ezpauthn.cgi?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1523810724?accountid=15115>
- Osborne, M. (2016). Access to higher education. In J. E. Côté, & A. Furlong (Eds.) *Routledge handbook of the Sociology of higher education*, (pp. 119-127). New York, NY: Taylor and Francis.
- Pickard, S. (2016). Higher education mission over time in Anglo-American institutions. In J. E. Côté, & A. Furlong (Eds.) *Routledge handbook of the Sociology of higher education*, (pp. 40-47). New York, NY: Taylor and Francis.
- Pinkerton, C. (2017). Demographic data from Western University, Fanshawe College give unique look at what male, female students study. *The London Free Press*. Retrieved from <https://lfpres.com/2017/09/04/demographic-data-from-western-university-fanshawe-college-give-unique-look-at-what-male-female-students-study/wcm/0825127c-dd61-11d9-2262-8422778f688f>
- Plager, L. & Chen, E. (1999). Student debt from 1990-91 to 1995-6: An analysis of Canada student loans data. *Statistics Canada: Education Quarterly Review*, 5(4), 10-28.
- Polster, C. (2016). Vicious circle: Academic insecurity and privatization in Western universities. In J. E. Côté, & A. Furlong (Eds.) *Routledge handbook of the Sociology of higher education*, (pp. 94-103). New York, NY: Taylor and Francis.
- Roksa, J., & Robinson, K. J. (2016). From in loco parentis to consumer choice: Patterns and

- consequences of the changing relationship between students and institutions. In J. E. Côté, & A. Furlong (Eds.) *Routledge handbook of the Sociology of higher education*, (pp. 106-114). New York, NY: Taylor and Francis.
- Rubin, M., Evans, O., & Wilkinson, R. B. (2016). A longitudinal study of the relations among university students' subjective social status, social contact with university friends, and mental health and well-being. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 35(9), 722-737.
- Saunders, B., Sim J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B., Burroughs, H., & Jinks, C. (2017). Saturation in qualitative research: Exploring its conceptualization and operationalization. *Quality & Quantity*, 52(4), 1893-1907. Retrieved from <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2Fs11135-017-0574-8.pdf>
- Sax, L. J. & Weintraub, D. S. (2014). Exploring the parental role in first-year students' emotional well-being: Considerations by gender. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 51(2), 113-127.
- Schwartz, V., & Kay, J. (2014). College mental health: A system in transition. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 1(4), 254-255. Retrieved from <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/cgi-bin/ezpauthn.cgi?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1773462188?accountid=15115>
- Sirgy, M. J., Grzeskowiak, S., & Rahtz, D. (2007). Quality of college life (QCL) of students: Developing and validating a measure of well-being. *Social Indicators Research*, 80(2), 343-360. doi: 10.1007/s11205-005-5921-9
- Staats, S., Armstrong-Stassen, M., & Partilo, C. (1995). Student well-being: Are they better off now? *Social Indicators Research*, 34(1), 93-112. doi: 10.1007/BF01078969
- Statistics Canada. (2014). *Undergraduate tuition fees for full time Canadian students, by discipline, by province (Canada)* (Table). CANSIM (database). Last updated August 26th, 2014. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/educ50a-eng.htm> (accessed November 30th, 2017).
- Statistics Canada. (2015). *Table 1 Number and proportion of the population aged 25 to 64 by highest level of educational attainment, Canada, 2011* (Table). CANSIM (database). Last updated December 23rd, 2015. <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-012-x/2011001/tbl/tbl01-eng.cfm> (accessed December 7th, 2017).
- Statistics Canada. (2016). *Table 477-0019 Postsecondary enrolments by institution type, registration status, province and sex (Both sexes)* (Table). CANSIM (database). Last updated November 23rd, 2016. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/educ71a-eng.htm> (accessed November 30th, 2017).
- Statistics Canada. (2017a). *Table 477-0077 Canadian and international tuition fees by level of study, annual (dollars)* (Table). CANSIM (database). Last updated September 6th, 2017. <http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a26?lang=eng&retrLang=eng&id=4770077&pattern>

=&stByVal=1&p1=1&p2=37&tabMode=dataTable&csid= (accessed November 30th, 2017).

Statistics Canada. (2017b). Education in Canada: Key results from the 2016 census. *The Daily*.

Statistics Canada. (2017c). *Table 051-0001 Estimates of population, by age group and sex for July 1, Canada, provinces and territories annual, (persons unless otherwise noted)* (Table). CANSIM (database). Last updated September 27th, 2017.
<http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a26?lang=eng&retrLang=eng&id=0510001&&pattern=&stByVal=1&p1=1&p2=50&tabMode=dataTable&csid=> (accessed November 30th, 2017).

Statistics Canada. (2017d). Number and salaries of full-time teaching staff at Canadian universities, 2016-2017. *The Daily*. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/170425/dq170425b-eng.htm>

Statistics Canada. (2017e). *Table 477-0017 Number of full-time teaching staff at Canadian universities, by rank, sex, Canada and provinces annual (number)* (Table). CANSIM (database). Last updated November 28th, 2016. (accessed November 30th, 2017).

Statistics Canada. (2017f). *Table 477-0098 Participation rate in education, population aged 15 to 29, by age group and type of institution attended, Canada, province and territories, occasional (percent)* (Table). CANSIM (database). Last updated March 29th, 2017.
<http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a26?lang=eng&retrLang=eng&id=4770098&&pattern=&stByVal=1&p1=1&p2=31&tabMode=dataTable&csid=> (accessed November 30th, 2017).

Stead, R., Shanahan, M. J., & Neufeld, R. W. J. (2010). "I'll go to therapy, eventually": Procrastination, stress and mental health. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 49(3), 175-180. Retrieved from
<https://www.lib.uwo.ca/cgi-bin/ezpauthn.cgi?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/742982114?accountid=15115>

Student Mental Health and Wellness Advisory Committee. (2018). Western's Mental Health and Wellness Strategic Plan: Mental Health and Wellness for All. Retrieved from
http://studentexperience.uwo.ca/student_experience/strategic_planning/mental_health_strategic_plan/MH_Stratplan_DRAFT.pdf

Sunter, D. (1992). Juggling school and work. *Perspectives on Labour and Income*, 4(1), 1-8.

Svanum, S., & Bigatti, S. M. (2009). Academic course engagement during one semester forecasts college success: Engaged students are more likely to earn a degree, do it faster, and do it better. *Journal of College Student Development*, 50(1), 120-132.
doi:10.1353/csd.0.0055

The Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada. (2011). Undergraduate students. *Trends*

- in Higher Education, 1*, 3-9. Retrieved from <https://www.univcan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/trends-vol1-enrolment-june-2011.pdf>
- Trow, M. (1961). The second transformation of American secondary education. In M. Burrage (Ed.), *Martin Trow: 20th-century higher education elite to mass to universal* (pp. 53-77). Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Trow, M. (1974). Problems in the transition from elite to mass higher education. In M. Burrage (Ed.), *Martin Trow: 20th-century higher education elite to mass to universal* (pp. 88-141). Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Trow, M. (1976). Elite higher education: An endangered species? In M. Burrage (Ed.), *Martin Trow: 20th-century higher education elite to mass to universal* (pp. 143-172). Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Trow, M. (1992). Class, race, and higher education in the United States. In M. Burrage (Ed.), *Martin Trow: 20th-century higher education elite to mass to universal* (pp. 208-233). Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Trow, M. (2000). From mass higher education to universal access: The American advantage. In M. Burrage (Ed.), *Martin Trow: 20th-century higher education elite to mass to universal* (pp. 303-328). Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Trow, M. (2006). Reflections on the transition from elite to mass to universal access: Forms and phases of higher education in modern societies since World War II. In M. Burrage (Ed.), *Martin Trow: 20th-century higher education elite to mass to universal* (pp. 556-610). Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Türkdoğan, T. & Duru, E. (2012). The role of basic needs fulfillment in prediction of subjective well-being among university students. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice, 12*(4), 2440-2446.
- Universities Canada. (2016). Enrolment by university. *Universities Canada*. Retrieved from <https://www.univcan.ca/universities/facts-and-stats/enrolment-by-university/>
- Universities Canada. (2017). Facts and stats. *Universities Canada*. Retrieved from <https://www.univcan.ca/universities/facts-and-stats/>
- Wang, M., & Peck, S. C. (2013). Adolescent educational success and mental health vary across school engagement profiles. *Developmental Psychology, 49*(7), 1266-1276. doi: 10.1037/a0030028
- Western University. (2018) Facts & figures 2016-17. *About Western*. Retrieved from <https://www.uwo.ca/about/whoweare/facts.html>
- Wisenthal, M. (2014). Section w: Education. *Statistics Canada*. Retrieved from

<https://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-516-x/sectionw/4147445-eng.htm#3>

- Wrench, A., Garrett, R., & King, S. (2013). Guessing where the goal posts are: Managing health and well-being during the transition to university studies. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 16(6), 730-746.
- Yorgason, J. B., Linville, D., & Zitzman, B. (2008). Mental health among college students: Do those who need services know about and use them? *Journal of American College Health*, 57(2), 173-182. doi:10.3200/JACH.57.2.173-182
- Zelan, J. (1975). Undergraduates in Sociology. In M. Trow (Ed.) *Teachers and Students: Aspects of American Higher Education*, (pp. 183-198). McGraw-Hill.

Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Guide

Research Project: Student Perceptions of the Context of Mass Higher Education
Dr. Andrea Willson (PhD) & Caitlin Burd (BA)

Research Question 1: a) How do students perceive the massified university context? b) Do they recognize the factors associated with massification at their university? c) How do they describe the context of the university system and their place within it?	
Interview Questions	Probes
First I am going to start with some basic demographic questions. What year are you in? How old are you? To which gender do you identify? What department or faculty are you in? What was your housing situation in first-year? What is it now?	
Why did you want to attend university?	Did your parents encourage you to attend? Did a teacher or guidance counsellor encourage you to attend? Did your parents or siblings go to university?
What do you hope to gain from attending university?	Was attending about increasing your knowledge about the world? Learning specific skills? Getting a good job? Something everyone was doing? Something you've always wanted? If you weren't here, where would you be?
Why did you pick this university?	Location, size, reputation (what about the reputation), friends going to this university, etc.?
What can you tell me about your time at university thus far?	What do you like about this university? What do you dislike about this university?

	Do you feel like you are part of a community at this university?
Describe to me a typical first-year class that you've taken?	<p>How many students were in the class?</p> <p>What was required of you in the class?</p> <p>How did your professor provide feedback?</p> <p>Did you feel their feedback was helpful?</p> <p>Were you able to use a laptop, and did you?</p> <p>How did you do in the course?</p> <p>How do you see class size as impacting your academic achievement?</p> <p>Did you like the course?</p> <p>Do you think you learned something from the course material? Was it worthwhile?</p>
Do any of the characteristics of the average class description you just gave me stand out to you as impacting your learning in positive or negative ways?	Class size, laptop/distractions, evaluations
How important is getting good grades?	<p>Why is it or is it not important?</p> <p>What else is important about your experience in university?</p> <p>How does the university environment (such as size of the institution, class size, faculty relationships, peer relationships) impact your ability to do these things (get good grades, socialize, etc.)?</p>
How would you describe your professors overall?	<p>Do you think they seem committed to teaching? To helping students learn?</p> <p>Do you think that professors understand your point of view?</p> <p>Do you think that professors really impact students and in what ways?</p> <p>How do you feel professors treat you?</p>

	<p>How did you find your instructors' teaching styles?</p> <p>Do you think that this type of teaching style is required when classes are large?</p> <p>Are there better or more effective methods that could be used?</p> <p>Based on this information, describe for me your favourite and least favourite professors and why you feel this way?</p>
How often do you usually attend your classes?	<p>(If they miss class) What are some reasons that you may miss a class?</p> <p>Do you think it matters if you miss class? Why or why not?</p>
Think about a typical week – not during midterms – and think about how it looks in terms of time spent studying, class time, and time with friends.	<p>About how much time per week do you usually spend studying (doing homework, completing assigned readings, etc.)?</p> <p>Do you meet with professors outside of class? How often? Why?</p> <p>Do you meet with other students outside of class? How often? What kinds of things do you meet about?</p> <p>Do you think your peers meet with professors outside of class?</p> <p>Do you think your peers meet with other students outside of class?</p> <p>Would you say you spent the same amount of time studying in high school as you do now?</p>
Do you think that the amount of time you spend studying impacts your learning?	<p>Do you find yourself doing a lot of the work (i.e. readings, assignments or essays) last-minute? Why?</p> <p>Do you think your peers' complete readings or assignments last-minute?</p> <p>Do you think the time spent reading or completing assignments impacts your grade? Your happiness? How?</p>

	<p>Do you think the amount of time you spend preparing for classes reflects how you feel about the material you are learning? How?</p>
How would you compare your experience in high school to your experience in university?	<p>Did you like high school?</p> <p>Did you enjoy your classes in high school?</p> <p>Did you have to work hard to get good grades? Do you have to work harder in university, less, or about the same?</p> <p>Did you like your teachers?</p> <p>Did you feel connected to your high school – did you feel like it was a community?</p> <p>Do you feel like this university is more of a community than your high school or less? Why or why not?</p>
Okay, now I am going to shift gears a bit, are you aware of any mental health resources that are available on-campus for students?	<p>How did you hear about them?</p> <p>Do you think there are more effective ways that the university could share information about these resources with students?</p> <p>Have you or anyone you know used these resources? Why or why not? How were they?</p> <p>Do you think that these resources are well-suited to help students who are struggling? What could be improved?</p> <p>Do you think that having these on-campus resources is important for students?</p> <p>If you had a problem, where would you turn for help (parents, friends, resources on-campus, professors, etc.)?</p> <p>Do you use these other resources? (Social support from friends or family, self-regulation, etc.)</p>

<p>Research Question 2: How do students conceptualize their well-being in relation to the factors associated with massification, such as disengagement, available resources, the instrumental value of higher education, and contact with faculty?</p>	
Interview Questions	Probes
In terms of your experiences at university that you've described to me, how would you say the university has impacted you overall – your health or your happiness for example?	<p>Are there positive ways it has affected you?</p> <p>Has it affected you negatively?</p> <p>What about your peers?</p> <p>Do you feel that grading practices are fair?</p> <p>Do you see a connection between the effort you put in and the results you have achieved?</p>
Do you find the size of classes impacts you socially or emotionally?	<p>Is having a large student body positive or negative? Why?</p> <p>Do you think of the university or your classes as nurturing environments? How?</p>
Do you think that the amount of time you spend studying or attending classes impacts you emotionally or socially? How?	
Do you think it is important to meet with professors outside of class? Why or why not?	<p>If you were to meet with professors more often how do you think that would impact you (grades, emotional support, etc.)?</p> <p>Do you see your professors as an avenue of emotional support?</p>
Are you happy with your decision to attend university? Why or why not?	Do you think that your motivation for attending university influences how you experience the university?
What are some of the most satisfying things to you about attending university?	
What are some of the most dissatisfying things?	
Overall, how would you describe your experience so far in university?	<p>What has been positive about your experience?</p> <p>What has been negative about your experience?</p> <p>Are there ways the university could improve your experiences?</p>

Appendix B: Letter of Information and Consent Form



Project Title: Student Perceptions of The Context of Mass Higher Education

Principal Investigator:

Andrea Willson, Ph.D., Sociology, Western University, [REDACTED]

Co-Investigator:

Caitlin Burd, B.A., Sociology, Western University, [REDACTED]

Letter of Information and Consent

A) Invitation to Participate

You are being invited to participate in this research study, which investigates how students perceive the university environment and the ways this context may be impacting them. You are being asked to participate as a second-year undergraduate student currently enrolled at [REDACTED] University.

B) Purpose of the Letter

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information you require to make an informed decision on whether to participate in this study.

C) Purpose of the Study

This study aims to discover how students think about their experiences in university and the ways they feel the structure of university, such as class size, the size of the university, and the amount of contact with faculty affects them.

D) Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To participate in this study, individuals must be currently enrolled at [REDACTED] University as a second-year undergraduate student and between the ages of 18 to 22. International and exchange students, and students over 22 will be excluded from this study given their potentially unique experiences.

E) Study Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to attend a sixty to ninety-minute interview with the researcher that will be audio recorded. This recording is mandatory for participation in the study to ensure quality of the analysis. This interview will be conducted on [REDACTED] campus in a quiet room. Interviews will focus on student experiences at university, and how students relate experiences in university to their well-being.

F) Possible Risks and Benefits

The questions asked in the interviews are not sensitive in nature, and thus there are no known risks to participating in this study. The study could benefit society in furthering understanding of how the structure of universities may affect students.

G) Compensation

You will not be compensated for your participation in this research study.

H) Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to answer any questions asked during the interviews, or withdraw from the study at any point. Withdrawal or refusal to answer will have no repercussions. You do not waive any legal rights by signing the consent form below.

I) Confidentiality

To participate in this study, the researchers will have access to your full name and your email address. These identifiers will not be used in the final paper and instead participants will be referred to using a set of numbers for both the final write-up and differentiating between interviews. Anything that contains these identifiers, such as the consent form below, will be kept on a password protected computer in an encrypted file. Your interview will be audio recorded and the researcher will take sparse notes during the interview. All data collected in this study will remain confidential and will be used only for the purposes of the current study. Direct quotes may be used in the final write-up of this study but participants will be referred to using a set of numbers and not their names. If the results are published, the name of participants will not be included in the study. If you choose to withdraw from this study, any data collected on your interview will be removed and destroyed.

J) Contacts for Future Information

If you require any more information on this study, you may contact Andrea Willson, email: [REDACTED] or Caitlin Burd, email: [REDACTED]. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant or about the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics, [REDACTED] email: [REDACTED].

If you experience emotional distress or become distraught before, during, or after the interview, you may contact any of the following organizations:

- Wellness Education Centre, [REDACTED] email: [REDACTED] or visit [REDACTED]
- The Student Development Centre, [REDACTED] or visit [REDACTED]

- Good2Talk, [REDACTED]
- Reach Out (crisis response service), [REDACTED]

K) Publication

If this study is published, your name will not be used in any way. If you wish to obtain a copy of the results, please contact Caitlin Burd at [REDACTED]

L) Consent

Consent will be obtained by participants signing the attached consent form.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Appendix C: Ethics Approval Form



Date: 6 December 2017

To: Dr. Andrea Willson

Project ID: 110402

Study Title: Student Perceptions of the Context of Miss Higher Education

Application Type: NMREB Initial Application

Review Type: Delegated

Full Board Reporting Date: January 12, 2018

Date Approval Issued: 06/Dec/2017

REB Approval Expiry Date: 06/Dec/2018

Dear Dr. Andrea Willson

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the WREM application form for the above mentioned study, as of the date noted above. NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the expiry date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

This research study is to be conducted by the investigator noted above. All other required institutional approvals must also be obtained prior to the conduct of the study.

Documents Approved:

Document Name	Document Type	Document Date	Document Version
Interview Guide	Interview Guide	26/Sep/2017	
LOI and Consent Form Revised 11:15:17	Written Consent/Assent	15/Nov/2017	4
Oct. 26th Revised Poster	Recruitment Materials	26/Oct/2017	3

No deviations from, or changes to the protocol should be initiated without prior written approval from the NMREB, except when necessary to eliminate immediate hazard(s) to study participants or when the change(s) involves only administrative or logistical aspects of the trial.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. Members of the NMREB who are named as investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system that is compliant with all regulations).

Curriculum Vitae

Caitlin Burd

EDUCATION

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| 2016 to Present | Master of Arts: Sociology
Western University, London, Ontario
Thesis: Student Perceptions of the Context of Mass Higher Education |
| 2011 to 2015 | Honours Specialization Bachelor of Arts: Criminology and Psychology
Western University, London, Ontario |

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| May 2017 to August 2017 | Research Assistant for Dr. Kim Shuey
Western University, London, Ontario |
|-------------------------|---|

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| September 2017 to April 2018 | Teaching Assistant
Western University, London, Ontario
Course: Introduction to Sociology 1020
Instructor: Dr. Scott Schaffer |
| September 2016 to April 2017 | Teaching Assistant
Western University, London, Ontario
Course: Introduction to Sociology 1020
Instructor: Dr. Scott Schaffer |

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- Burd, C. (2018, March). *Student Perceptions of the Context of Mass Higher Education*. The 10th Annual Sociology Graduate Student Conference. London, Ontario.
- Burd, C. (2017, March). *Mass Higher Education and Student Mental Health*. The 9th Annual Sociology Graduate Student Conference. London, Ontario.